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**A Comparative Study about Early Childhood
Teachers' Preparation and Role in England and
Kuwait**

Submitted to

School of Education

University of Durham UK

**As a thesis towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Education**

By

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MEd (Hull, UK)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discuss the interconnection between the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and practices of early childhood teachers and trainees during the classroom practice of teachers and preparation of student teachers. The aim of this study was therefore to increase our understanding of how knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of the participants intersect to inform their teaching practices, and to draw some conclusions that could be used to further development of early years teachers.

The notable feature is that this study is a comparative one. The researcher chose two countries where early childhood education and its teacher training programmes were being implemented, although in different ways. England and Kuwait are two contrasting countries from different global regions and having different religious and cultural contexts. The study also explored how far the English experience has potential to inform the development and improvement of Kuwaiti early childhood teacher education and training programme. This issue was examined in detail in different teacher training institutes located in England and Kuwait.

To study such highly complex processes a multi-method approach was utilized by using a naturalistic or interpretative methodology. The researcher used Bereday's comparative methodology to investigate the juxtaposition of these two early years education systems and teacher training programmes. To achieve the research objectives, a qualitative approach along with documentary analysis was employed. All semi-structured interviews were taped and transcribed. The data were coded and recorded several times using the comparative process.

The evidence presented in the results supports the arguments that teachers' knowledge,

beliefs, and attitudes do underpin their classroom practice and that there are factors that constrain or support teachers in their efforts to teach according to their knowledge and beliefs about learning and teaching. The data analysis in both countries revealed some similarities and differences, which exist between teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and classroom practice with regard to early years teacher education and training. The research revealed that trainee teachers' knowledge, belief and attitude were closely linked, although their knowledge developed as a result of their learning, but beliefs they brought remain stable.

Based on the analysis of the findings, this research theorizes that early years education and its teacher education are developed when teachers and trainees are provided with pedagogical content knowledge, and beliefs to improve the capabilities of early years teachers, and opportunities to interpret pedagogical knowledge, beliefs and attitudes into classroom practices to make the most of their capabilities. The findings revealed that teachers' and trainee teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are interlinked. Although trainee teachers' knowledge developed as a result of their learning, some of their beliefs about Early Childhood Education (ECE) in general seemed to remain stable over the period of their university course. The findings showed that trainee teachers' built their teaching identities on the wider social-cultural purposes of education in English and Kuwaiti societies, which reflected expectations of their roles in society. The study also identified other important differences as between the two early childhood education approaches and teacher training systems, namely in terms of: the governmental vision, educational policies, institutional provision, teacher training curricula, traditional disparities and theoretical reinforcement.

In summary, this thesis examined the role of early childhood teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about learning/teaching process and the relationship to classroom practice. It critically explored the impact that a range of factors have on teachers' ability

to implement practice that was consistent with their stated beliefs. This research also revealed how questionable it can be to merely state what the similarities and differences really are between two early childhood teacher education systems. However, various constraints related to the university context, to the nursery/kindergarten context and to the social-cultural context influenced their preparation as teacher, especially in State of Kuwait.

Declaration

This thesis is my own work and has not been offered previously in candidature at this or any other university.

Suad A T Noor

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved mother Noora Almuheni
who always support me and believed in me when I did not believed in
myself.

Acknowledgement

First of all, I wish to thank Almighty Allah for His unfailing grace without which I would have been unable to complete this thesis.

There are many individuals who need to be recognized for their support, and encouragement through the completion of this thesis. A special note of gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. Julie Rattray. Without her unparalleled professionalism, guidance, and encouragement this thesis would not have been impossible to do.

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I would like to thank the people in the Ministry of Education and the Basic School of Education Kuwait, through its upgrading qualification teaching programme, which not only helped me expand my academic life but also my world.

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Finally, yet importantly, I would like to identify and thank namely, Mah-E-Rukh Ahmed for her moral support, encouragement and practical help during my difficult times in England.

LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms	Description
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ECCE	Early Childhood Care & Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education & Care
EFA	Education for All
EI	Emotional Intelligence
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYITT	Early Years Initial Teacher Training
EYTS	Early Years Teacher Status
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GMR	Global Monitoring Reports
JCP	Job Centre Plus
KD	Kuwaiti Dinar
LA	Local Authority
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
OECD	Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PACI	Public Authority for Civil Information
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate of Education
PAAET	Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Department
QCA	Qualification and Curriculum Authority
SSLP	Sure Start Local Programmes
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations
WCECCE	World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education

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Introduction

During the last 30 years there has been very rapid global changes in political, economic and technological conditions and these changes have a great impact on education systems generally and teacher education particularly. Educational changes and reform take place around the world to achieve the high quality educational services. These changes not only affect the education system but also have a great impact on teachers and their profession. In this context, teachers are challenged in their roles as educators and their day-to-day demands at work. This new role of educators reassesses their attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and practices in their profession and they are expected to use the best practices and strategies to meet the challenges and demands of their career. To fulfill the responsibilities of nation building, the teachers need to prepare sufficiently and possess a high-level of professional attitude and knowledge (Jamil, et al., 2011). Therefore, this study is an attempt to reveal the realities and comparison of early childhood teachers, their beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, training and practices in England and the State of Kuwait.

Every teacher in the process of his/her professional development goes through specific periods, each of which has its specific role, characteristics, and consequences. The teachers' professional development is a process in the course of which the teacher should try to establish and maintain the highest level of professional capabilities, which s/he is capable of achieving (Terhart, 1997). While it is true that the teacher's development can be stimulated and supported 'from outside', it cannot be achieved in a mechanical manner. Therefore, the teacher's development is a process of self-development of the individual in a number of areas.

There is no surprise that all over the world, governments are interested in improving the professional development of their early years teachers by up-dating their initial teacher education and training programmes. The teacher becomes a reflective expert who is endowed with flexibility, differentiation of emotions and beliefs, respect for individuality, tolerance for conflicts and lack of clarity, the ability to cultivate interpersonal relations and to see the broader societal perspectives (Witherell & Erickson, 1978, cited in Zuzovsky, 1990).). As TTA (2004) reveals:

‘Teaching is one of the most influential professions in society. In their day-to-day work, teachers can and do make huge differences to children’s lives: directly, through the curriculum they teach, and indirectly, through their behaviours, attitudes, values, relationships with and interest in pupils’. (p: 3)

Hargreaves (1994) indicated the changing world of teachers:

People always want teachers to change. Rarely has this been truer than in recent years. These times of global competitiveness, like all moments of economic crises, are producing immense moral panics about how we are preparing the generations of the future in our respective nations. (p.5)

The new responsibilities and demands, in the changing world of education, require teacher training for early childhood, teacher participation, teacher performance, and a sense of ownership and commitment (European Commission, 2013).

The Context of the Research

In the 1990s, early childhood education attracted the attention of governments in the majority of developed and developing countries. This was due to changing views of education at both the international and national level. The modern trends in early childhood education provided new understanding of how young children best learn. Therefore, the Governments of England and Kuwait provided funding to promote the preschool education and improve the quality of early childhood teacher education.

Accordingly, a range of approaches to curriculum and pedagogy exist in the early childhood settings in both countries.

The British government has been taken interest in developing the standards of the children studying in preschools in UK, therefore, a large number of learning goals have been set for the children to achieve. The pre-school curriculum guidelines have been formalized and published. Recently, the Childcare Bill (DfE, 2015b), which has been taking its way through parliament, aims to extend free early education for three-and four-year old from 15 to 30 hours each week for working parents. Currently, all three and four year olds in England receive 15 hours of free early education each week for 38 weeks of the year (Policy Statement, DfE, 2015b). All nursery schools are registered and inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) and all these schools have to meet a set of 14 national standards for childcare (OfSTED, 2015a). Many providers of early childhood education are also accredited through a quality assurance (QA) scheme. In English nursery schools, play is an integral part of the curriculum, founded on the belief that children learn through self-initiated free play in an exploratory environment (OfSTED, 2015b; Wood & Attfield, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford, et al., 2002; Young-Ihm., 2002; Curtis, 1998).

In Kuwait the government provides funding, however, early childhood education is not included in the regular public education system. Kindergarten school education is not compulsory but is provided free to Kuwaiti citizens. The entry age is usually 4 years and its duration is two years. In Kuwait kindergarten schools are primarily concerned with pre-academic orientation, focusing on preparation for formal school learning. In Kuwait, the emphasis in early childhood education must not only be upon care, but also upon learning and development. There are two main providers for early childhood

education in Kuwait: the College of Basic Education, which offers academic, cultural and pedagogical training to female teachers for kindergartens; and the Faculty of Education, at the University of Kuwait.

The Problem of the Study

The main concern of this study is the system of early childhood education, the performance of early years teachers, their attitude towards teaching, appropriate knowledge and beliefs to work in the classroom of nursery/kindergarten schools. It examines the nature of teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes that impact on classroom practice. When examining the early years learning environment, the teacher is the most important piece of the learning puzzle, and a mediator of the learning-teaching process. The selection of issue to the study is derived from the researcher's own experience as a kindergarten teacher and teacher educator in a training institute. To understand these issues there is a need to improve and modernize the teacher education and training systems in different countries and cultures. Internationally and nationally teacher education and training and its reforms are taking place and there is a discussion about the changing level of responsibility for teachers and its effects at the teaching profession and teacher education throughout the world (Karras & Wolhuter, 2010).

This research is challenging and different, since the comparison between England and Kuwait was not previously taken. Therefore, it is significant to understand the preparation of early childhood teachers, to investigate their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes during the learning/teaching process. Moreover, having conducted this research, it is the view of the writer that it is possible for Kuwait to gain from certain aspects of the experience in England, especially in early years administration and its quality control.

The Aims of the Study

Since the 1990s the importance of teacher education and training for early childhood teachers took into account and many countries started to reform teacher training. Globalization and internationalization of teacher training become important to face the challenges in the socio-political, cultural and economic context of 21st century. These international and global mechanisms can be maintained through an effective teacher education system and professional teachers who are able to realize societal objectives and maintain social and cultural values. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which the preparation of early years teachers in England and Kuwait contribute to improve and develop their performance in terms of their beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and classroom practice. The research also examines, how these competencies enable or constraint trainees' and teachers' ability to learn and teach. Furthermore, the purpose of this research is also to increase our understanding of the role of trainees' and teachers' cognition, defined by Borg (2003) as, 'what teachers know, believe and think' (p.81) in their teaching practices. For this purpose, the following objectives were derived:

- To investigate the different aspects influencing the early childhood teacher education and performance of the kindergarten teachers in terms of attitude, beliefs, knowledge and classroom practice;
- To explore how these four dimensions affect the children's learning and teaching in early childhood settings;
- To analyze the current preparation of teachers and teaching practices;
- To compare the early childhood education systems in England and Kuwait;

The Significance of the Study

Early childhood education is significantly related to the concept of teacher's beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, practice and professional development, and all these aspects need qualified professional teachers to carry on the task. The current study will be applied to student teachers, who are studying in early years teacher training programmes and practicing teachers. Currently, England plays a significant and leading role among developed countries in terms of early childhood education, care and policymaking. On the other side, Kuwait also plays an important role among the Arab world in terms of awareness, advocacy and recognition of early childhood and its learning challenges. For the last decade the teacher training providers in England also emphasized the importance of distinct early childhood education training programmes and all providers have separate departments for this purpose. In Kuwait, in 2007, the government of Kuwait organized a workshop, 'Train the Trainers' in association with the Centre for Child Evaluation and Teaching, which trained 350 teachers from different backgrounds (www.kuwaittimes.net).

Although a number of studies have been carried out in this field, they have, as far as the researcher is aware, been conducted almost entirely in Western countries, especially in England. There is no in-depth study as yet of Kuwait's early childhood education policy and practice, and it is important in developing this to relate it closely to the international context. International research in general and early childhood education in particular about Kuwait is very limited as compared to England. As far as the researcher has been able to discover, international research has been conducted in this area for few academic degrees or to develop country reports for UNESCO, and there are relatively few Kuwaiti researchers who have contributed to early childhood education in Kuwait.

Moreover, these studies did not cover the main issues of early childhood education. This study seeks to fill this gap, that is, to contribute an in-depth study of the preparation of early childhood teachers and their role in early years classroom settings.

This research is significant because the findings may be useful in developing future policies governing early childhood education and would be of value to those who are engaged in the preparation of early years teachers. This research would be possible for State of Kuwait to gain from certain aspects of the experience in England because the early years education system is more established in England. Furthermore, the investigation will add to the wider international research base on teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, by providing culturally situated aspects to the understanding of early years teacher education.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study

This study concerns early childhood education, its teachers, teacher's preparation and performance in the classrooms in England and Kuwait. In this study several factors, including the participants, researcher and chosen methodology have the propensity to affect the trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and conformability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) of the investigation's findings. Because of the limitations of time and resources, the research is confined to two universities and two early childhood schools (in each country), and early childhood teachers in England and in the State of Kuwait as the subject of empirical investigation. In England, several of the universities, applied to participation refused to participate due to academic issues. In addition, there is paucity of literature and policy network about early childhood education and teacher education in Kuwaiti culture but the literature from Western culture helped to improve the study.

In addition, the research only considers the perspectives of teachers educators, teacher trainees and qualified early years teachers, and relied on participants' integrity and truthful depiction of experiences and beliefs about teaching. The researcher's ability to depict participants' thoughts and experiences accurately is also an important consideration. As the methodology of this study involved the use of semi-structured interviews, there is a possibility to be misunderstanding the pronunciation and terminology. To overcome this possibility, the written questionnaires were handed over to the participants.

The notable strength of the study lies in the different methodological approaches, achieved by applying various methods including documentary analyses, qualitative survey, semi-structured interviews, structured discussion, and comparative approach. Furthermore, to establish the content, face validity, and verify the codes and categories, all the research instruments were discussed with my supervisor, other faculty members and supervisors of early childhood centres.

Finally, this study relied on participants reflecting on their experiences, beliefs, attitudes and practices. Therefore, there is a possibility to have different comments.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into four parts, excluding this introductory chapter, which has outlined the study and put it into context, containing of nine chapters overall, organized as follows:

Part One: Scene Setting, Background and Conceptual Framework:

This part includes the Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2.

The Introduction has explained the background and aims of the study, and its significance, purpose and scope.

Chapter 1 contains an investigation of the research, dimensions and themes, and definition of terms. Moreover, a conceptual framework for early childhood education is developed.

Chapter 2 includes a review of literature pertinent to the topic under study. It pays particular attention to global perspectives on early childhood education, giving special attention to the formation of early childhood education. It examines a variety of theoretical and background research materials, published and unpublished, from both developing and developed countries, related to the study.

Part Two: Research Design and Methods

This part consists of chapter 3. The chapter describes and justifies the comparative research methodology. It introduces the research questions, which emerged from the literature reviews and outlines the sampling procedures and research methods employed. The researcher explains how she used and adapted Bereday's (1964) comparative methodology in order to fulfill the aims and objectives of the research questions, as well as making use of the 'constant comparative method' for the analysis of data.

Part Three: Historical and Documentary Analysis.

This part contains Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapters 4 and 5 each provide detailed historical analysis and description of the contemporary situation of early childhood education, based on detailed literature review and document analysis of the educational policies and reforms in England and Kuwait,

respectively. This also contains relevant information on the social, cultural and educational background that provides the broader context of the study.

Part Four: Data Analysis, Comparison and Conclusion

This part includes chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Chapters 6 and 7 present the results, and analysis of the data derived from semi-structured interviews and documentary research in England and Kuwait, respectively.

Chapter 8 draws conclusions based on the findings of the research. This chapter synthesizes the comparison of early childhood education based on the conceptual framework within both countries.

Chapter 9 summarises the research and draws conclusions with discussion and reflection on the research findings, along with suggestions for further research. The whole is reviewed in the hope of adding to current theory and benefiting future researchers operating cross-nationally. Conclusions are drawn from the total analysis in the light of the hypotheses posed and research questions asked. Key issues arising as well as emerging themes that have cross-national significance for the understanding of early childhood education are identified.

Chapter One: Focus of the Study

There have been great men and women whose vision and action have inspired a generation: Robert Owen, Friedrich Frobel, in our own time, Margret McMillan and others. But they pass away, and their ideas pass away with them unless ideas are fashioned into new forms which reflect new circumstances and stand the test of new practices in the contemporary scene....(Schiller 1979: xvii)

1.1 Introduction

The beneficial impact of early childhood care and education (ECCE) on several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is undisputed. Investments in ECCE pay for themselves by improving children's performance later on in education, and in terms of a number of more broad social outcomes such as a good health, a stable life, higher chance of employment, lower crime rates, and so on so. Yet, the majority by far of public investment in basic education is committed to primary education (Ravens & Aggio, 2008).

The United Nations Convention of 1989 defines children's rights into four categories: prevention; provision; protection; and participation. These categories cover the areas of illness, neglect, general and special needs education, exploitation and abuse and the right to participate in decision-making. The majority of countries were the signatories of this Convention. As a result, there is an increase of policy involvement by concerns for young children's education, care and health, cultural, social and political changes, and impact of new technology. Therefore, government policies have a great impact in shaping prevention, provision, issues of ethics and politics, social and cultural changes in early childhood education. Therefore, there were the voices and arguments we heard

about, ‘back to the basics’, ‘grading kindergarten’ and ‘no child left behind’ to defend testing and strict accountability measures (Yelland & Kilderry, 2005). All these on-going changes have a huge impact on early childhood teaching, research and families of young children (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001) and ‘enables early childhood educators to change the educational landscape to be more relevant and inclusive for young children’ (Yelland & Kilderry, 2005: 3). Especially, teachers are challenged in their roles as educators, reassessing their beliefs and practices in order to cope with the demand of the work. Hargreaves and Evans (1997) stated that the role of teachers is very crucial to put educational policies and strategies into practice when implementing the educational reform. Brownlee, et al., (2000) highlight the need for educators to examine and reflect on knowledge and beliefs so that the quality of programs for young children can be maintained.

In comparing the preparation and role of early childhood/kindergarten¹ teachers in England and State of Kuwait, the researcher had to focus on the four competencies of teachers and their command to teach the early childhood curriculum. These competencies may influence the preparation and performance of early years teachers in both countries. Therefore, it was decided to focus on these four competencies of teachers in both teacher training programme and classroom practice, and the research proceeded on that basis.

¹ The words: early childhood education centers; pre-school nurseries; and kindergarten (outside the USA & UK), will be used under the same category. The kindergarten is more commonly used in the State of Kuwait than in the England, where nursery school is the more common term.

This chapter sets out to review briefly the available literature in relation to all aspects considered essential to the study. This includes all expressions used in this thesis, for example, teacher training; teachers' knowledge and skill; teachers' beliefs; teachers' attitudes; and teachers' classroom practice. The worth noting point is that all these competencies are interrelated to each other in every aspect of early childhood teacher education.

1.1.1 The Investigation

The empirical investigation centred on the following themes:

- The analysis of four competencies;
- The influence of these four competencies during teacher training;
- The link between teachers' preparation and teachers' performance.

The investigation is also up-to-date by the review of primary and secondary literature, which covers both relative issues and studies. A unique element of the literature accessed is that concerned with the methodology of educational research, including comparative analysis. There is a need to explain the terms used in this research at this stage.

1.1.2 Explanation of Terms within the Context of the Research

The key terms used in this thesis are, early childhood teacher training; classroom pedagogical practice; and early childhood curriculum. To show the relationship to the problem, each of these terms are discussed, as Wilson (1994) advises the researchers to

‘clarify the relevant concepts’ when writing. He stresses that concepts ‘have to be thoroughly understood...and it is better to make them as explicit as possible, even at the risk of belabouring points with a persistence which may weary the reader’ (p. ix).

a) Early Childhood Teacher Training

The salient aim of training is to help a learning organisation to achieve its purpose by adding value to its key elements, the people it employs, and training in this context means investing in people to enable them to improve their performance and make the best use of their potential (Armstrong, 2003). Perraton, et al., (2002) suggested four elements of teacher education: a) improving the general educational background of the trainee teachers; b) increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are to teach; c) pedagogy and understanding of children and learning; and d) the development of practical skills and competencies (p: 8).

b) The Preparation of Early Childhood Teachers

Teacher preparation, knowledge of teaching learning, subject matter knowledge, teaching experience, and the combined set of qualifications measured by teacher licensure are all leading factors in teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The common assumption is that teacher training satisfies both the theoretical and practical needs of the teaching environment; that a teacher who comes from training would know how to cope with the practical management and organization of instruction in the classroom, as well as the theoretical aspects of child development and learning (Ahmed, 2008: 38). However, it cannot be assumed that a teacher will absorb this knowledge indirectly or will be able to apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems automatically without further instructions (ibid: 39).

c) The Role of the Early Childhood Teachers

Teaching in a pre-school set up is a challenging job. Teaching to young children is more difficult and demanding rather than teaching to primary school children. Teaching involves appropriate interaction with learners, using a number of strategies, for example, play, hands-on experiences and language development, to enable learning to take place (Siraj-Blatchford et.al. 2002). A kindergarten teacher has many aspects to fulfil her/his role including: providing the appropriate material and equipment for play activities; providing the safe learning environment; to facilitate children; to observe the children very carefully; to communicate with them; and must have the quality to deal with emotional, physical and educational aspects of children.

d) Early Childhood Curriculum

Curriculum is the organized framework that demarcates the following:

- The content that children are to learn;
- The process through which children achieve the identified curricular goals;
- What teachers do to help children achieve these goals; and
- The context in which teaching and learning occur. (NAEYC, 2003)

A curriculum helps to ensure that kindergarten teachers cover important learning areas, adopt a common pedagogical approach and reach for a certain level of quality across age groups and regions of a country (Bennett, 2004). Early childhood curriculum must be broad, and contribute to the child's overall development as well as to latter success in school (ibid, 2004).

1.1.3 Research Questions

The main research questions for this study are:

- *‘How the early years teachers perceive their preparation as a teacher and performance in the classrooms in terms of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practice?’*
- *To what extent do the pre-school teacher education programmes in England and Kuwait provide an adequate preparation for all the needs of teachers?*
- *To what extent does a comparative study of these issues as between the two countries help to identify problems involved and indicate solutions to these problems?*

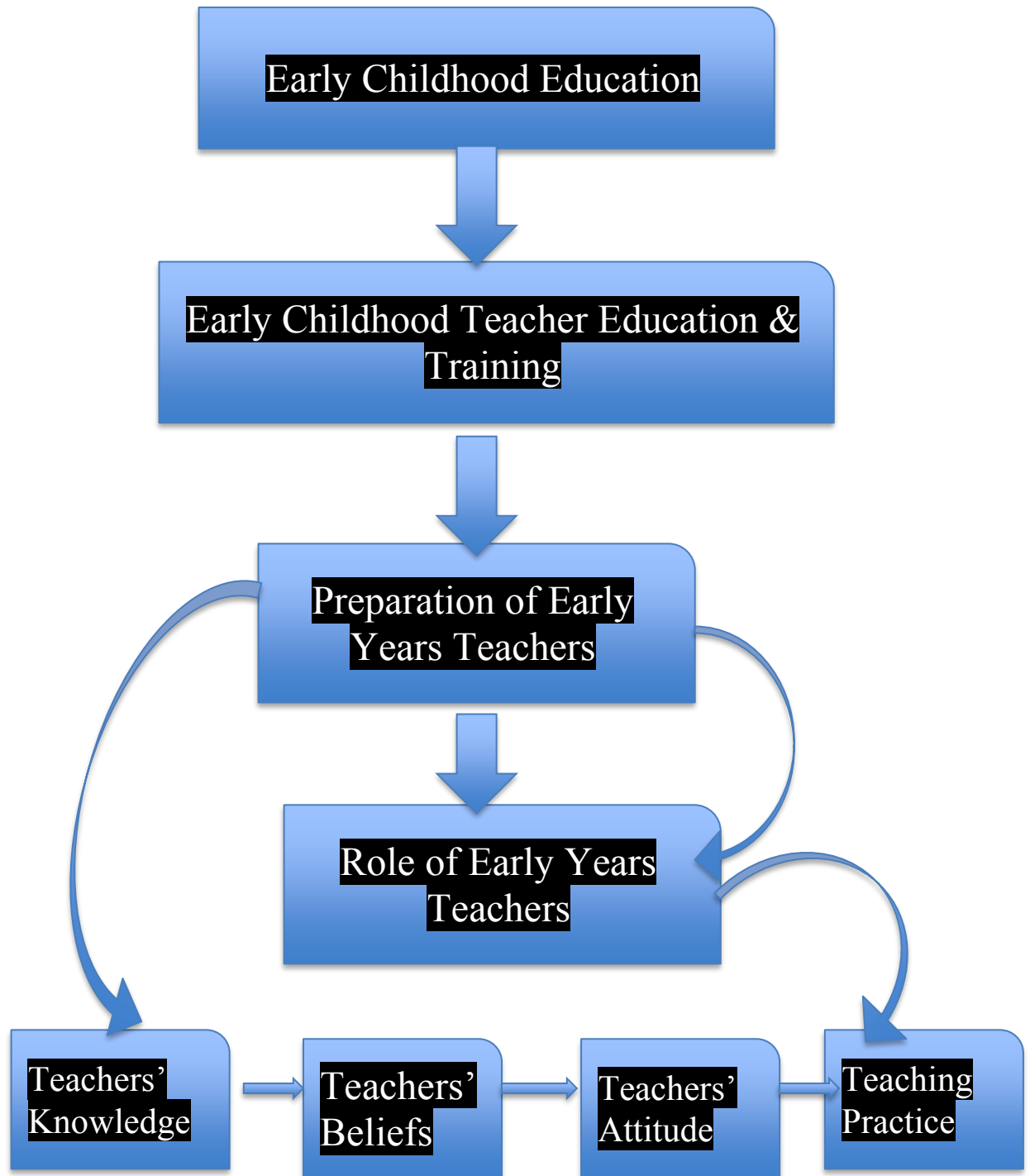
The questions explore the current and past structures of what establishes early years teacher’s knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes during learning and teaching process. It also explore, how early childhood teacher can use the appropriate pedagogy and teaching approaches to young children.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

In order to develop the prospective potencies impacting the preparation and role of early childhood teachers’ knowledge, attitude and beliefs, dimensions identified in the literature review are grouped into two aspects: teachers’ circumstances, and their experiences in terms of four competencies, including, knowledge, attitude, belief and practice during the learning-teaching process.

The research shows that early childhood teachers have undergone their past experiences that assist to adapt and absorb new experiences, contributing to their knowledge and belief and lead to change their attitude and practice.

Figure 1.1: The Conceptual Framework of Early Childhood Education



Suad Noor, 2016

The study recognises that the competencies of teachers may be influenced by their circumstances and experiences. Through qualitative methodology, involving semi-structured interviews, early years teachers describe the factors that contribute to the understanding of early years teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes and their impact on their teaching.

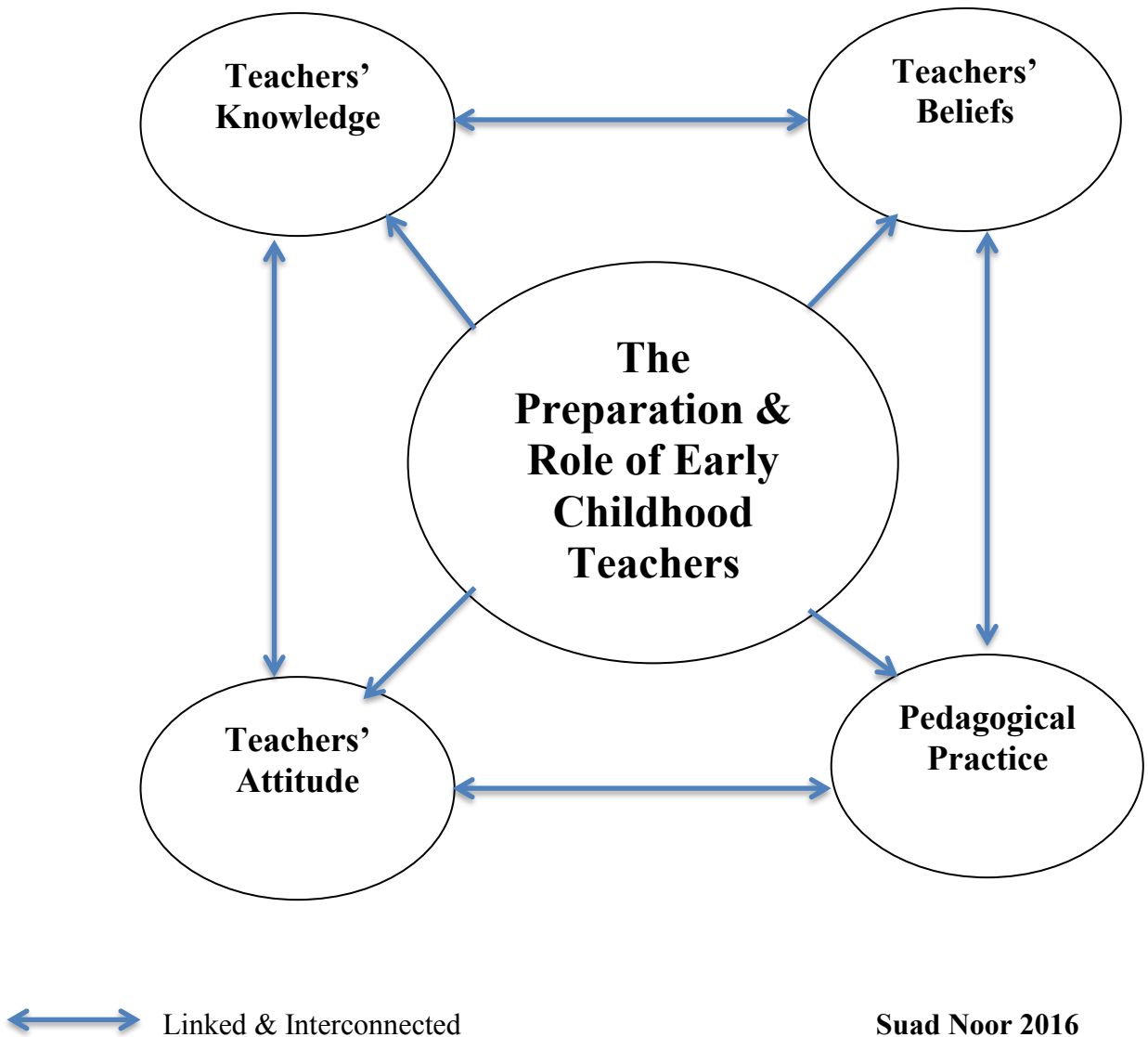
The conceptual framework illustrates the integration of key aspects of the research. This interconnection could be better represented how teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices interact and inform each other insistently in a vibrant process of teacher training programmes and classroom practice.

1.3 The Four Prospective Competencies Impacting on Preparation and Role of Early Childhood Teachers

The practical learning and teaching experiences of the early childhood teachers and trainee teachers, during training and practice, are a major source of their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, which appear to be more influential and reflective rather than theoretical aspects.

This research is focused on the relationships between teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and their teaching practices, which also interact with each other firmly (*Chapters, 2, 8*). It analyses how three elements of teacher cognition, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, inform teaching practices.

Figure 1.2: Four competencies of preparation and role of early years teachers.



1.3.1 Teachers' Knowledge

According to Anderson (1976) knowledge has been classified into two types: declarative and procedural. Declarative knowledge is classified as the factual information about the meaning or procedural characteristics of educational subject matters; and procedural knowledge is identified as the knowledge of performing certain tasks, transforming information from abstract to practical, and advocated different new

methods to solve new problems. Teachers' practical knowledge is the result of interplay between experiential and theoretical knowledge, which influences the teachers' values and beliefs, and affects the teachers' responses to a situation (Elbaz, 1983). Richards (2008) categorized teacher knowledge as 'Knowledge about' and 'Knowledge how'. According to him, knowledge about is based on explicit knowledge whereas knowledge how is based on implicit knowledge. Implicit knowledge covers personal beliefs, attitudes and theories that motivate teachers' practical actions.

Shulman (1986b) stated that content knowledge is the knowledge teachers need in order to teach the content including the knowledge of the learner and learning, and pedagogical knowledge is the way in which a teacher communicates and transfers this content to students. Teachers' subject matter knowledge underlies their power and strength as teachers. This study focuses on these categories of teachers' knowledge (*for details see Chapter 2*).

1.3.2 Teachers' Beliefs

Beliefs are an important foundation for early childhood educators. The way they engage with their work is dependent on a strong understanding of what an early childhood educator is. In pre-school, teachers' beliefs also affect learning priorities. To define the term belief, eight categories were discovered, some of which included beliefs as being equated with knowledge, beliefs that precede attitudes and behaviour, attributes of beliefs that a person holds true, beliefs as personal convictions based on observation or logical reasoning, and beliefs as an acceptance or rejection of a proposition (Mansour, 2009).

Although research (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) suggests that beliefs and perceptions are an important influence on pre-service teacher success in teacher education programmes as well as in the workforce, little is known about those of students entering early childhood pre-service teacher programs (Gravis, et al., 2012). Bandura (2006) stated that teachers' practices are associated with their beliefs, and new information confronted by teachers is clarified through their existing beliefs (Kagan, 1992a). Kagan (1992b) described teacher beliefs as 'teachers' sense of self-efficacy and content-specific beliefs' (p.67). Positive beliefs about teachers' capability can play an important mediating role between knowledge, skills and actions as a teacher (Bandura, 1997b). Beliefs have been described as subjective and based on evaluative decisions (Smith & Shepard, 1988a), but they may also be based on objective fact (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs are elastic and can be shaped for a specific context (Pajares, 1992; Smith & Shepard, 1988b). Teachers' beliefs fell along a continuum from traditional to transitional to transformational (*see Chapter 2*).

1.3.3 Teachers' Attitudes

An attitude is a paradigm of judgment toward a topic, item, or circumstances; it determines the behaviour intended for that topic of interest (Kersh, 2011; Scior, 2011). The attitude a person holds on a matter can often predict the way that person will respond to the situation including those with individuals with exceptional educational needs. Cherry, (2013) defined attitudes into two ways, 1) 'Attitudes form directly as a result of experience. They may emerge due to direct personal experience, or they may result from observation' (p: 1). 2) 'Social roles and social norms can have a strong influence on attitudes. Social roles relate to how people are expected to behave in a particular role or context. Social norms involve society's rules for what behaviours are

considered appropriate' (p.2). Therefore, the experiences and social norms shape the attitudes of early childhood teacher positively or negatively during their working environment (*see Chapter 2*).

1.3.4 Pedagogical Practice in the Classroom

Pedagogy is referred as “set of instructional techniques and strategies, which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context. It refers to the interactive process between teacher and learner and to the learning environment” (Siraj Blatchford et al., 2002). In England, the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, are frequently mentioned as having influenced curriculum and pedagogy., and in Kuwait, the Froebel Approach has influenced pedagogy.

Pedagogy is influenced by a number of factors such as country's ECEC system or organization, and links to primary school education. Moreover, teachers' knowledge, teachers' qualification, teacher training, content and teachers' skills influence the teachers' pedagogy. Pedagogical practices are influenced by organisations that monitor settings' results and practices (Wall et al., 2015). The above all aspects will be discussed in *Chapter 2* in more details.

1.4 The Contributors

Tuohy, (1997), defined a contributor as,

‘Someone who has a legitimate interest in the organization and its activities and, as a result, may have some right to influence the direction of the organization’ (p: 32).

Key contributors of early childhood education are: governments; providers of early years teacher training (universities and school); and teacher educators, practicing teachers and trainee teachers. Each contributor is linked directly to the key issues, which they represent. This study includes the main function of these contributors and perceptions can be achieved through the opinions of interviewees.

1.5 The Selection of Case Countries

According to Bereday (1964), a cross-national comparison can be valued as, ‘to see schools of other countries not only as they appear in their own national contexts but in terms of other systems’ (p.6). Therefore, the provision of early years education and its teacher training programmes in both countries are analysed in Chapters 6 & 7.

While localities are undoubtedly distinctive, it is necessary to select cases for comparison that have sufficient similarities. Cross-nationally it can be problematic, especially when selecting two national cases where urban social development – with public education as a key component – needs to exhibit sufficient parallels (Smith, 1976 and 1977, cited in Ahmed, 2008). There are significant differences between the social, cultural and linguistic aspects between both countries therefore, for this doctoral programme of three-four years it was not possible to include the social and cultural aspects thoroughly at this stage.

Although each case is unique, for this case-study approach it is better to select locations with as high a degree of comparability as possible so as to maximise the potential value of replication logic that may arise from the analysis (Yin, 2003; Wolcott, 1990). This in turn will enhance the potential outcome of the research in its contribution to theory.

Within England, it was decided to avoid the main capital cities, but in the case of Kuwait the main capital city was included, in order to reduce the level of differences between the two case locations.

The English Case Location

The English case-locations are the two main cities of neighbouring counties. The cities have grown from both towns established in medieval times and particularly through large expansions in the nineteenth century and then in the late twentieth century. These periods of significant urban growth represent very different economic developments. Much urban growth is associated with the establishment of a large working class population in traditional industries. More recent economic development- electronic and modern manufacturing industries, and social and professional sectors –are associated with the growth of a middle class. In this case, it was decided to select two main Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs) and two pre-primary schools from these counties (See Chapter 4).

The Kuwaiti Case Location

The Kuwaiti case-location is the main capital city of State of Kuwait. The city has many boroughs in it. The city is the political, cultural and economic centre of Kuwait and is considered a global city. The city has a petroleum-based economy; petroleum and fertilizers are the main export products. The Kuwaiti Dinar (KD) is the highest-valued currency unit in the world. It has a population of 4.1 million in the metropolitan area. Among 60% of Kuwait's population is Arab and the remaining 40% consists of non-Arab expatriates, mainly South Asian migrant workers. Kuwait has a wealthy,

open economy that is dominated by oil industries. The city has many modern architectural features and high-rise buildings, towers and shopping complexes. It is situated at the Gulf Bay and has very long coastal roads called, 'Corniche'. This coastline is 310 miles (400km). It was decided to select the two Higher Educational Institutes and two pre-primary schools from this city (see Chapter 5).

1.6 Summary

This research examines the preparation and particularly the role of early childhood/kindergarten teachers. The study examines the four competencies of early years teachers; teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and pedagogical practice during their preparation as teachers and actual practice in the classrooms. Moreover, the study also examines, how to compare these competencies between two different countries.

The Chapter Two presents the existing literature about the system of early childhood education, preparation of its teachers and the role of the teachers. The literature also discusses the four main competencies of early childhood teachers and trainees. The Chapter Two will also explore the aspects discussed in this current chapter. Moreover, the majority of literature about early childhood education has been taken from the Western and English researches because Kuwaiti literature is very limited in this particular field.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The rate of change taking place in all spheres of global society requires adequate reconstruction of the system of education to satisfy the need to prepare a new generation of professionals ready to live and work valuably in the 21st century (Kolomiets, 2009). In the Western world, the quest for the establishment of markets in all private and public areas has affected education (Apple, 2002). These rapid on-going changes have had a remarkable impact on teachers' everyday work and challenged the role and responsibilities of this profession. This calls for the re-evaluation, the knowledge, beliefs, skills and practices of teachers in order to fulfil the demands of quality education in every country and has become a global issue. The success and failure of educational reform is dependent on teachers' abilities to understand and to implement the proposed reforms (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997). In last two decades, there has been tremendous improvement in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and therefore the role of the kindergarten teacher within the educational process has become an important issue.

An OECD (1996) paper demonstrated that many countries in the developed world are engaged in a process of 'systemic reform' of their education service. This is based on a growing awareness around the world that changing one element of an education system has knock-on effects on the rest of the system and that it is more effective to aim at changing the system as a whole (Townsend, 1996). Governments in developing countries have moved from emphasising increased access to education to focusing on both access and enhancing the quality of education (UNICEF, 2002).

This chapter provides an insight into the status of early childhood education, including an overview of the nature of early childhood teachers' training and pedagogy, changing educational philosophies and changing realities of early childhood teachers' practice. The review highlights both national and international research, which has investigated issues impacting on early childhood teachers' practice. The chapter sheds light on the relevant topics including performance of early years teachers, their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and practices in the classrooms.

2.1.1 Early Childhood Education

'Early childhood education does not refer to a single entity; rather, the term covers a variety of programmes for young children between birth and age eight. These programmes take place in children's own homes and in public schools, private pre-schools, and child-care homes and centres'. (Bowman, 1993: 101)

The last twenty years have witnessed increased awareness of the importance of early childhood and policy attention (Dakar Framework for Action, UNESCO, 2000) to comprehensive early childhood programmes that integrate health, nutrition, and provide for children's holistic development; cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development. This is evident in a number of events that brought early childhood to the public interest (UNESCO: WCECCE, 2010). Over the past several years a number of long-term social and economic trends have contributed to increasing interest in the education of children under five (Barnett, 2002).

During the last few decades the field of early childhood education (ECE) is experiencing deep reform in two key ways: 1) affecting the nature of teachers' learning and teaching practices, and 2) worldwide increase in the number of 3 to 4 year old children attending early years centres.

The international drive for expanding (ECE) programmes began in 1989 with the adoption of the UN Convention on the 'Rights of the Child'. In 1990, the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, in its Article 5, called for broadening the scope of basic education by recognizing that learning begins at birth. It also prioritized early childhood care and education (ECCE) as a foundation for later learning and development and called for early childhood care and initial education to be provided through a variety of arrangements involving families, communities or institutional programmes. This world conference helped the field of ECE find its way into policy-making agendas.

In April 2000, representatives from 164 countries, adopted the "Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All (EFA): Meeting Our Collective Commitments" at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The signatories committed to ensuring that, in the learning environment, the content, processes and context of education must be free of gender bias, and encourage and support equality and respect. This includes teachers' behaviours and attitudes, curriculum and textbooks, and student interactions (UNESCO, 2000). One of the main EFA Goals was to 'expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education (ECCE), especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children'. Incorporating ECCE into EFA provided a mechanism to focus on problems facing early childhood services; namely, resources, ages to be served, facilities, and trained staff.

In 2002, a United Nations, 'Special Session on Children' led to the launch of EFA's Global Monitoring Reports (GMRs) (2007), which are annual assessments of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), making a compelling case for

ECCE, and calling for more policy attention and investment in the area. Having all the nations of the world included in this annual report reinforces the tendency to consider ECE at the national level. The report emphasised the need for strong foundations of ECCE. The first ever World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) raised awareness about the importance of ECCE as a human right and a development imperative, and highlighted the global status, challenges and experiences of expanding quality ECCE equitably (UNESCO, 2010).

Examination of the trends of early childhood services worldwide shows that ECCE programmes are high on the child and family policy agenda of all advanced industrialised countries today and many developing countries as well, particularly in areas of early intervention programmes and parent education (Kamerman, 2000). Research (Arthur et al. 2005; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005) reveals the impact of major social, economic, political and technological changes on children's lives and families. The original 'Neighbourhood Communities' have been replaced by the new 'Cyber Communities' and this term influences children's identities and the way in which they are regarded as learners.

Definitions of different terms

Many terms are used for ECE, it is referred to as infant education, nursery education, pre-school education, kindergarten or early childhood education: such programmes are the more formal component of ECCE. Pre-schools have adopted various methods of teaching, such as: Montessori; Waldorf; Head Start; High Scope; Reggio Emilia Approach; Bank Street; and Forest Kindergartens. The range of early years institutions are defined by Hillman & Williams (2015: 4):

- Full day care is settings that provide on-site day care for children under five, for a continuous period of four hours or more in any day, in premises, which are not domestic premises.
- Sessional providers are settings where children under five attend for no more than five sessions a week, each session being less than a continuous period of four hours in any day. Where two or more sessions are offered in any one-day, there is a break between sessions with no children in the care of the provider.
- Nursery schools provide education for children under the age of five and over the age of two. Maintained nursery schools generally accept children in term time. Data from 2013 includes independent as well as maintained settings so are not directly comparable to previous years.
- Primary schools with nursery and reception classes operate throughout the school year. Data from 2013 includes independent as well as maintained settings, as well as any early learning provision offered for children aged two or younger, so is not directly comparable to previous years.

The term early childhood education (ECE) emphasises the comprehensive nature of development that takes place before the child goes to school. It is now widely acknowledged that the effects of what happen during the pre-natal period and during the earliest months and years of a child's life can last a lifetime (MoE, 2007a). It happens in early years education is often considered only from the point of view of the experience of individual children and the way in which they interact with each other. It lays the foundation for the development of reading, writing and number work. It encourages interaction with the environment, participation in different activities and enhances creativity and problem solving in children. It is concerned with physical, linguistic,

social, cognitive and educational growth of a child in its first five to six years (Baker, 1987).

Piaget (1955), in his approach *Social Constructivism*, stated that children aged from 2-6 years are pre-operational and they can construct their own understanding. During this period, early years teachers, parents and caregivers determine how a child can learn and relate to school and life in general. Vygotsky (1978) takes this further, saying that the role of the adults in cognitive development of the children is more important than the activities, that children choose by themselves. According to both theories, children need to have both solitary and cooperative learning experiences.

Research suggests that early childhood education plays a vital role in the balanced development of a child from the early years to adulthood. As Sylva and Lunt (2003) state, the first five years of every child's life are very important for his/her emotional, intellectual and social development. These years lay the foundation for all these aspects, which will persist through the life course (Woodhead, 2006). Therefore, a child in his/her early years develops all the important aspects of emotional and social intelligence including: confidence, curiosity, self-control, connectedness, purposefulness, and capacity to communicate. In spite of its diverse interpretations, ECE has always been closely tied to changes in society. Like a barometer, 'early childhood programmes respond to social, political, and economic climates' (Jorde-Bloom, 1988: 171).

In the early years brain development influences the long-term cognition, imagination, behaviours and skills of the individuals (Mustard, 2002). During these early years, human brains are capable of absorbing more information than later on. Flear (2000: 12)

stated that the neural connection of child's brain become 'hard-wired' during first three years of his life. A stimulating and receptive context can set a young child on the path of discovery, openness to the outside world and the capacity to integrate information (MoE, 2007a). According to Schweinhart and Weikart (1996), early childhood experiences help a child to gain an interest in learning, a willingness to try new things and to trust adults, a strong sense of independence, and to avoid negative behaviour. The early years are also critical for the attainment of the concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. These include the acquisition of language, perception-motor skills required for learning to read and write and basic numeracy concepts and skills (MoE, 2007a). According to Rubeiz (2008), EC programmes should promote the habit of children to establish the habit of thinking on their own from the early years, as the way the brain is wired, learning and other forms of developmental stimulation are crucial in the early years.

In many countries full-day kindergarten classrooms have clearly defined academic objectives; kindergarteners are encouraged to think and are taught how to solve problems, share ideas, ask questions, and to make and justify connections. They learn methods of exploring their surroundings, make hypotheses and test them, and reach their own conclusions. Froebel (1895) and Montessori (1965) believed that children learn from their own activities. Early childhood educationists have long believed in the importance of learning by doing for young children. According to File and Gullo (2002), research results are replete with evidence that early childhood experiences serve as major influences of academic interest and achievement. Bruce (2011) stated that:

Beyond their family, children need adults who are mature, well educated, trained and qualified to a high level in their knowledge and understanding of child development, so they can help children to learn effectively, achieve, enjoy and make a contribution. (p.1)

Bruce (1990) further stated that, ‘the children are learning through doing at this stage of development. This means they will experiment with materials’ (p.66).

2.1.2 Performance of Early Years Teachers

There has been an intense reform in the field of ECE since the ‘Education for All’ Conference in Jomtien (UNESCO, 1990), Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and Millennium Development Goals (2007). These worldwide changes affected the nature of teachers’ work and created a need for a greater number of early childhood educators. This changing world of early childhood educational settings increased the number of 3 to 5 year old children in kindergartens and this increase required the services of skilled and competent early childhood teachers. Nowadays kindergarten teachers not only perform as guides for children’s emerging and developing selves but they are also charged with delivering a broad range of subject content, requiring an equally broad mastery of pedagogical knowledge. According to Stanford (1991) teachers require certain skills and knowledge that are categorized under content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of the learner and some other sources of knowledge such as family influences, experience with different teachers and experience with children, like babysitting. All early childhood educators need to study the children’s learning from birth. The development of every child is the result of a unique interaction of experience with heredity. While genetic programming determines many of the characteristics displayed by any human being, a variety of environmental influences combine to affect the development of the brain and consequently the individual (Shaffer, 2004). Darling-Hammond (1995) stated that the invention of 21st century schools that can educate all children will rest, first and foremost, upon the development of a highly qualified, effective and committed teaching force.

The preparation, induction, and professional development of teachers are the core issues for educational reform. ‘Responsibilities and roles of teachers are changing and new roles and qualifications are introduced. Much has changed and it has changed very rapidly, in recent years’ (Palaologou, 2010: xv). To fulfil this requirement, there is a need to provide an adequate system of early childhood teacher education. To improve the quality of Early Childhood Education, ‘there is a demand for highly qualified, well-trained and well-educated teachers’ (Palaologou, 2010: xv).

The purpose of this study is to look beyond teacher competency to get some insight into what it takes to be a successful kindergarten teacher. Working with children and young people is not always easy but it is very rewarding. It is a high-profile policy area with fast-moving, and at times, radical, changes in practice. The findings of this study could help administrators and educators acquire a better understanding from the perspective of kindergarten teachers that lead to quality kindergarten education in Kuwait and England.

The chapter is divided further into two parts: part one comprises of theories and significance of ECE internationally; and part two discusses the preparation and role of early years teachers.

Part One

2.2 Historical Perspectives of Early Childhood Education, its Pedagogy and Teachers' Role

Froebel in Germany, Montessori in Italy, the Macmillan sisters in Britain, Malaguzzi (Reggio Emilia Approach) in Italy, and the majority of educationists in the developing countries have advocated the establishment of nursery/kindergarten using play as a method of teaching and learning. Hughes (1980: 210) quoted Froebel as stating:

Nurseries should not try to teach children things they are not interested in or ready for but should be places where children are as free as possible to play, explore, discover, and above all be happy.

The roots of kindergarten education in the Arab countries extend to ancient Arab thinkers such as Ibn-e-Khaldun, Al-Ghazali and others, all of whom are concerned with a child-centred educational approach (Al-Biblawi, 2001). According to Ibn-e-Khaldun (1988) information should be given to children gradually in stages, lower to higher, 'from easier to the more difficult', which they may understand. One of the elements Al-Ghazali (1951) insists upon is that a child should be taught the words of the Creed in his earliest days and be taught the meaning gradually as he grows older; corresponding to the three stages of memorising, understanding and conviction. He emphasised in his approach to children's learning the complementary development of the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of children (Dahkallah, 1996). These theories are based on Islamic perspectives and different from Western theories in a way but not contradictory. Al-Ghazali emphasised the need to develop children's intellectual abilities, creativity and knowledge and mentioned 5 points: a) the importance of education at a young age; b)

the need to play, that is giving the child a chance to play during learning; c) teaching being gradually introduced during child's learning; d) treating children kindly; and e) taking into account individual differences among children (Dahkallah, 1996).

The theories which represent the outcome of the Western studies conducted at the end of the twentieth century and implemented during the third millennium are not very different from the old philosophical thought and education theories presented by *Rousseau, Frobel, Pestalozzi, Montessori* and others, who laid the education principles and foundations for method of teaching and teachers' role in the teaching setting together with what such setting involves in terms of experiences, knowledge and activities. John Comenius, John Locke, and Jean Rousseau provided the philosophical foundations of ECE. Its curriculum and methodology were created by the likes of Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and Steiner. Most recently, it was scientifically grounded in the research and theories of Freud, Piaget and Erikson. Although there are differences in the approaches of these originators of ECE, they are underpinned by one common principle: that early childhood curriculum and practice must be adapted to the maturing needs, abilities, and interests of the child (Elkind, 2009). This philosophical thought can be discussed by exploring the education theories and opinions of those philosophers.

The majority of philosophers and instructors concerned with the teaching of children affirmed that the education function and its purpose in this phase is to develop the potential strong points and utilize the capabilities of a child, which emanate originally from hereditary factors. In this context *Rousseau* (1712-78) stressed that the instructors' unawareness of the child's nature has adverse impacts on the teaching process, and he called on instructors to urgently study children's cases to find out about their

inclinations and aptitudes, so as to direct each child according to his/her dispositions and desires. Teaching is carried out through self-drive by the child, which would grant him/her direct experience that is usually firmer and long lasting. *Rousseau* illustrated in his book (*Emile*) the importance of practical exercise and self-drive in the process of teaching and training the child, whereby the child must have a role and efficiency in what he is learning by means of interacting within the educational situation.

Pestalozzi (1746-1827) also perceived that self-drive of the child and its positive part in the educational and learning setting represent a guarantee for the success of the learning process. Thus, he called for adopting the meditation (observation) approach during teaching and training children so as to benefit from their capabilities and utilize them in observing everything surrounding them and also what is linked to them in respect of their life traits. This is because sensory recognition is the basis of the teaching process. *Rousseau* also perceived that teaching is done through three methods: Nature, Men, and Things, and he believed that the nature is the best teacher; thus he advocated leaving children to learn from nature and comprehend the power of the Creator, and that the child must not depend on books alone in learning.

Frobel (1782-1852) explained that children can learn through playing, he affirmed that children have an innate desire for movement, which discharges the energy latent within them, and this represents a systematic technique to educate the body, train and develop the senses, and acquire mental and social skills; this in turn will lead to forming ethical values and life skills that can be practised in life through the two processes of interaction and communication with others. *Frobel* affirms that in addition to the role of the senses in developing the child's brain, body, emotions, feelings and realization of

complete growth, they also contribute towards the child's understanding of the external things surrounding him/her according to their varying status.

Montessori (1870-1952) perceived that educating the senses leads to developing the mental processes and also improving the other aspects of growth. She stressed that development of senses advances and produces the soft mental works, and such development takes place in the child from the age of three to seven-years during his/her first phase of development. *Montessori* also stated that the environment offers the factors that help in the mental and physical development of the child more than anything else, and that they have clear impact on the child's teaching and upbringing.

In *Waldorf's* early childhood education programme physical activity is used to encourage imitation (Nicholson, 2000). *Waldorf* ECE supports children in an aesthetic environment. Creative play and artistic activity are frequent, allowing children to learn about the world around them through movement (Dancy, 2000).

The earlier philosophers and instructors perceived that the child learns better when the instructor follows a gradual approach in the teaching process, in terms of moving from simple to complicated, from easy to difficult, from general to specific and from whole to part.

2.3 Current Key Theories of Child Development

As mentioned earlier, during the last two decades ECE developed rapidly around the world. Some very important theories emerged. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological theory of child development became very popular due to its child-centred focus across

settings, with the family environment exerting the greatest emotional influence on the individual. The theory was premised on the fact that humans develop not in isolation, but in complex interrelationships with their family, the school, and the wider community, including global factors, and that environmental systems each influence one another in an iterative and dynamic way throughout life, where nature and nurture both matter (cited in Palaiologou, 2010: 39).

In the 1980's and 1990's the theory of Piaget (1896-1980) was internationally accepted, which defined the four stages of cognitive development: the sensorimotor stage (Infancy- 0-2 years); the pre-operational stage (toddler and early childhood- 2-7 years); the concrete operational stage (elementary and early adolescence- 7-11 years); and the formal operational stage (adolescence and adulthood- 12-adulthood). Piaget was the first psychologist to make a systematic study of cognitive development. Piaget believed that biological development drives the movement from one cognitive stage to the next, which in turn determines how learning is constructed, and at what age particular activities are appropriate for children. Many pre-school and primary programmes are modelled on Piaget's theory, which provided part of the foundation for constructivist learning. Although Piaget's theories have been subject of criticism, there is much that can help to plan teaching and learning for children with SEN and/or disabilities.

Similarly, Vygotsky's (1896-1934) concept of The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has also impacted on the field of early childhood education. According to Vygotsky, children learn best in a social, interactive context, where language is the main key to both informal and formal teaching (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Rieber & Robinson, 2004) and as a tool of thought (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky placed a far higher priority on cooperative and collaborative learning experiences with peers and

teachers' role in extending children's learning than did Piaget. These ideas were further developed by Bruner (1996) and his notions of 'scaffolding' and the 'spiral curriculum', which encourage carefully constructed steps in teaching. Bruner (1996) further emphasized that culture influence children's development, therefore it should be a part of early year education process.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky emphasise learning by doing, with children actively constructing knowledge through activity. Piaget's views are often compared with those of Vygotsky, who looked more to social interaction as the primary source of cognition and behaviour. The theories of Piaget and Vygotsky are frequently mentioned as having influenced curriculum and pedagogy in England, Germany, France and New Zealand. In England, for instance, the pedagogical practice of scaffolding is partly derived from the work of these theorists (Wall, et al., 2015).

The child is a blend of many parts that interrelate in different ways and change with growth over time. Biological processes describe changes in the body and cognitive processes are changes in one's thought, intelligences and languages. Socio-emotional processes reflect changes in an individual's relationships with other people, emotions and personality (Gordon & Browne, 2015). In this context the recent theory of multiple intelligences by Gardner (1993) changed the unitary notion of intelligence. According to Gardner (1993, 1999), young children have different abilities to learn and the teacher must know that the cognitive development of children is a continuous process and requires different learning opportunities. Beliaevsky (2006: 9) believes that 'Gardner's MI theory can be used as a tool for bringing to life Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development'. To improve the cognitive processes of children, Sternberg (1985) argued that early years teaching should balance the memory, analytical, creative,

and practical thinking of children. Teaching intelligences offers a way to help students improve their effectiveness and correct their weaknesses.

When concluding on the role of early childhood educators, one can say that the task of these teachers is to develop their understanding through different experiences. Their previous knowledge and experience encourage them to express and communicate their experience and develop their ability to differentiate objects and contexts.

2.4 Global Overview

Globalisation has been defined as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and *vice versa*'. (Arnone, 1999: 2)

Much of the concept of early childhood has been dominated by Western values, beliefs and practices. It is, therefore, essential to consider the cultural and social context and the impact of different ideologies on education as well as the effect of political systems and structures on schooling systems when examining other countries. It has to be appreciated that the importance of the ECE is a key concern of most societies and their governments around the world. It is important to recognize that despite the familiarity of these ideas, there are important differences among the different countries in the way in which these processes of reform have been constructed. While there is convergence in the nature of the challenges in ECE and its teacher education, the solutions to these challenges are different according to the cultural tradition of every country. That said, the 'globalisation' issue is relevant to this research, as it examines two countries from very different regions, normally classified as '*Western*' and '*Eastern*' (Ahmed, 2008).

Head Start, the largest and most researched of ECE programmes, was first implemented in the USA in the summer of 1965 as a federally administered programme. By the year 2000, 33 States were offering their own distinct classroom-based pre-school programmes (Ripple, et al., 1999), and all but nine states either administered their own pre-school programmes or supplemented existing pre-school programmes operating within their state, such as Head Start (Schulman, et al., 1999). Despite the progressive efforts of some states to move toward universal pre-school provision, others wait far behind. For example, the states of Georgia (1995) and New York (1998) provided pre-school space for all 4-year-olds, and were in the process of increasing funding to meet this new demand.

In the UK in 1997, an example of national developments includes the establishment of twenty-nine Early Excellence Centres to promote models of high quality, integrated, early years services for children under five and their parents (DfEE, 2001). In accordance with national policy, these centres aim to support vulnerable families, and to address child poverty through interventions from 'joined-up' services, including education, health, welfare and social services. The initiative has been evaluated at both local (Anning, 2001; Warin, 2001) and national levels (Bertram & Pascal, 2001; Bertram, et al., 2002). Also, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in the UK has funded the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Study (EPPE; 1997-2003), which was the first European Longitudinal study of a national sample of young children's (intellectual and social/behavioural) development between the ages of 3 and 7 years. In recognising the significance of the EPPE findings and contributions, the DfES decided to provide additional government funding to support The Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 Project (EPPE 3-11, 2003-2008) which continues to build on the extensive data collected in the original EPPE study.

The Effective Pre-school Provision Northern Ireland Project (EPPNI) was another longitudinal study, drawing on the work of EPPE, which aimed to investigate the characteristics of different kinds of early years provision in Northern Ireland. During this research, a range of factors was explored including child, family and home characteristics to determine whether children attending specific centres show outcomes that were more positive by the end of year 4 of statutory schooling (Quinn, et al., 2004).

In 1993, the Heads of states and government of nine highly populated countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan) launched the national movement E-9 towards providing more opportunities for ECE programmes in these countries. These nine countries represent over half of the world's population and 70% of the world's illiterate adults. The initiative of this programme aimed at achieving concrete progress in basic education. The initiative called for the education ministers of these nine countries to meet every two years to review their progress. E-9 countries have made significant socioeconomic progress. All nine countries have shown a clear awareness of the need to embrace ECCE within government policy and legislative framework. Moreover, this encouraging development is attributed in part to global initiatives on children, among which the Convention on the Rights of the Child and EFA have had the greatest influence (UNESCO, 2003).

Recent data from international organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF showed that there has been an improvement in pre-primary enrolment rates reaching 15% in the Arab countries. However, reports also indicated that there are variations. Lebanon, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates showed the highest rate of 70% while countries like Yemen, and Djibouti showed the lowest, which was less than 1% (UNESCO, 2005).

2.5 Significance of Early Childhood Education

“The early childhood period is unique and characterized by key developmental stages. According to various developmental theories (Rathus, 2006), development occurs across many dimensions: physiological, cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural, and hence it is a critical period where children are vulnerable to the adverse effects of inadequate health, malnutrition, abuse, and deprivation of parental care and responsibility” (UNESCO, WCECCE, 2010: 14).

Mustard and McCain (1999) claimed that early childhood learning has a significant impact on later development of children and their positive participation in Society. Flier (2000: 12) mentioned that the neural connection of child’s brain become ‘hard-wired’ during the first three years of his life. Research found that, ‘Early experiences and stimulating, positive interactions with adults and other children are far more important for brain development than previously realized’ (Mustard & McCain, 1999: 19). Therefore, during this age period the dynamic learning environments enhance the development of brain (Mustard & McCain, 1999). According to McCain et al., (2007),

‘We now understand how early child and particularly brain development sets trajectories in health, learning and behaviour for life. How we apply this knowledge in our various societies will determine whether we will be successful in the 21st century. (p. 11)

Early childhood settings, including crèches, day care and family day care centres, kindergartens and pre-schools are increasingly responsible for the nurturing, development and education of children from 0 to 5 years of age (Commonwealth Taskforce on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2005). The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED, 1997) defines Early Childhood Education as all programmes that, in addition to providing care, offer a structured and purposeful set of learning activities, either in a formal institution or in a non-formal setting. These

programmes are usually for children aged three years and above, and held for the equivalent of at least two hours a day for at least one hundred days a year (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2007). The Report (2007) further mentioned that,

‘Worldwide, almost 124 million children were enrolled in Early Childhood Education in 2004, an increase of 10.7 per cent over 1999. Increases were particularly pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa (43.5 per cent), the Caribbean (43.4 per cent) and South and West Asia (40.5 per cent). In most other regions the increases were modest, and in East Asia enrolments declined by almost 10 per cent. (p.20)

The early years centres or kindergartens as educational institutions have a vital role in the child’s education based on provision of an environment abundant in exciting tools and also professional teachers. Several education researchers and specialists (e.g. Vygotsky, Gardner, Sternberg, Goleman) involved in the process of child learning and education have strived to find out about the best methods and techniques that enable children to learn and acquire the concepts and experiences introduced to them, and also in the domain of identifying the characteristics of the educational and learning environment that helps children to learn and develop their mental, physical and emotional capacities at the same time. In the mid 1980s, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)² issued an explanation for the philosophy upon which the child learning and education process was founded, which depends mainly on achieving comprehensive development for the child, and calls for his interaction with the learning situation. The child development programmes, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), were based on Piagetian theories

² The largest non-profit association in the United States of America representing early childhood education teachers, experts and advocates in centre-based and family day care.

(Developmental Stage Theory)³, which promoted child learning through success-oriented tasks that matched children's level of development (Lambert & Clyde, 2000). The NAEYC (1987) criticized the traditional teaching system, which depends on the role of the instructor in the education process and reduces the child's role and interaction in this process.

After conducting studies and research in the domain of early childhood, the NAEYC suggested a new system and strategy which considered the child as the focal point of the education process, that s/he represents an integrated homogeneous unit in respect of the mental, physical and social aspects of child development, and that the education environment surrounding children must reflect this through the curriculum introduced to them as well as activities that suit their capabilities and fulfil their needs during the first phases of the early years. This system not only gave instructors larger freedom in acting with the children within the educational setting in line with their inclinations and interests, but it also called for the importance of parents' participation and benefiting from those of experience amongst them (Al-Ghafoor, 2004). As such, it can be said that the proposed system in teaching the children - which was later called the *Improved Approach* - is not a stand alone curriculum or specific method of teaching but rather is an improved approach to education that relied mainly on the results of research and theories on the process of child education and teaching, which came from a group of specialists in the field of early childhood.

Around the world, there has been a rapid improvement in ECE, formal or informal, at an earlier age. For example, Finland was the first country to grant the right to childcare

³ This is a comprehensive theory about the nature and development of human intelligence. It also deals with the nature of knowledge itself and how humans come gradually to acquire it, construct it and use it.

to all its children (Swiniarski & Breitborde, 2003). According to Flear (2000), in Europe up to 50 per cent of all 4 year old children attend nurseries. Over 90 per cent of 3 year old children attend nurseries in Belgium, France and Italy. In England, the government recognised the importance of children's early education and development in the 1990s and a report, 'Starting with Quality' was published (Miller, 2002: 17).

To promote the quality of early years educational practices and environments, the rapid expansion of early childhood education and the teaching profession has caused governments to review their educational policies, funding of this aspect of education and improve the quality of teacher training programmes (Drury, et al., 2000; Lambert & Clyde, 2000; Miller, 2002).

2.6 Development of the Individual Child/Curriculum

Research (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000; McCain, et al., 2007) has demonstrated the importance of early years experience as it impacts individual's later success in the areas of social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Individual development occurs within cultural, historical and religious activities as a result of cooperation as individuals try to solve conflicts between perspectives (Flear & Robbins, 2002). 'In terms of curriculum organization, most countries used areas of learning, a few used activities, and no country used discipline or subject' (Walsh, et al., 2010: 5). The most commonly identified areas are social and emotional; cultural, aesthetic and creative; physical; environmental; language and literacy; and numeracy' (Bertram & Pascal, 2002). Walsh, et al., (2010) further mentioned that many countries (including Kuwait) emphasised cultural traditions to enhance social connections through the curriculum, only three countries (England, USA, Tasmania) emphasised early literacy and numeracy

within the early years curriculum. In addition, recent conceptual frameworks of child development and early childhood education have suggested that social class, gender, race, and culture are much-ignored factors in the thinking and debate about child development and learning (French, 2007; Spodek, 1991).

Internationally there have been several well-known curricula for pre-school children. Two which are of particular importance are: (1) the American High/Scope Curriculum, that emphasized active learning, and a 'plan-do-review' approach, which encouraged children to take responsibility for their learning within a planned and richly, resourced environment (Abbott-Shim et al., 2000); and (2) Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (based on Piagetian theory), founded a belief that children learn best by participating in social activities, based on personal needs and interests, to interact within their environment. The majority of early childhood education programmes are based on *five* main areas of learning for young children: social; emotional; cognitive; language; and physical, therefore, the development of young children is an integrated process of these five areas through play and active methods. Therefore, the ministries of education of many countries have chosen to issue guidelines about EC programming, addressed as much to parents and local administrators as to the educators (OECD, 2006).

2.6.1 Social Development

Social development is a process in which children develop their relationship with their family, culture, people around them, and the environment. Social development teaches children to understand and manage people, and act wisely in social contexts. Learning to live socially with other people is not easily or quickly achieved; it is a slow process that can take much attention and care to develop. Learning to respect others, to participate and take turns, to share, to face problems and discuss them with others, are

not easy processes and take time. Children need to be able to play, experience, and get along with others to develop socially. Dreeben (1968) stated that life is governed by social rules and that children must learn and establish social values and responsibilities through the learning process. The social domain improves the ability of children to observe their surroundings and tries to work out what is good or bad or beneficial. A high quality ECE programme can help children to communicate and shape positive relationships with other children and elders. Though this processes the children understand and adopt the ethical issues in their everyday life (MoE, 2007b).

Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1985) believed that interaction between the child and others is vital to the development of mutual understanding and knowledge of social skills in life. Each function in a child's social development emerges twice: first on the social level - between people, and then on the individual level - inside the child (Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch & Rogoff, 1984). Wertsch (1985) explains that Vygotsky was convinced of the importance of social experience in early development, especially in relation to mental development. He stressed the importance of social and cultural influences on human development. Bruner (1996) emphasised that social experiences play a major part in cognitive development and was convinced of the importance of acknowledging the role of culture and social interaction. Little (1995: 45) argued that:

...children develop socially, emotionally, and intellectually through interaction with others. Teachers need to recognise the importance of developing positive peer group relationships and provide opportunities for co-operative learning situations that engage children in conversation, challenge their thinking and extend their ideas.

The process of social life begins early, but its scope increases, as the child gets older. Early childhood education provides the opportunity for children to develop their social competence when they are put in a position where they must learn to socialise and learn various types of manners. Early learning programmes should consider the importance of

both the personal and social aspects of the child because the sense of self and relationship to others is emerging at this stage. It is necessary to provide a social environment that stimulates children with a variety of objects with which to play and interact with their peers and an understanding adult who realises the importance of social interaction during this stage of development.

2.6.2 Cognitive Development

Cognitive development refers to the development of mental processes and capabilities. This is the development of learning, thinking and organizing systems of the mind. It develops the processes of imagining, exploring, thinking, language, reasoning, problem solving, developing and rejecting ideas and concepts. Maturation and interaction with a stimulating environment are important in the development of thinking. Gottfried (1984) stated that in the first five years of life, intellectual competence is related to the environment, and that the greater the variety of stimulating experiences, the greater the intellectual development. Sound cognitive development enhances critical thinking and creativity in children. Every early childhood education programme, to some extent, provides children with learning opportunities to explore, experiment, and think as they develop the ability to create different ideas and solutions (NAEYC, 1987).

Clarke (1968) argued that the environments, which provide poor stimulation result in poor intellectual development. According to Appleton et al (1975) freedom to explore allows children to process stimulation at their own pace. In Montessori's (1965) philosophy in relation to the early years of life, emphasis is placed on the practice of the five senses. Whitbread (1972) explaining this view:

Montessori found development of the five senses, particularly sight and touch, was fundamental to intellectual growth and understanding concepts of abstract qualities. (p.57)

Hunt (1961) explained that stimulation; develop the physical and cognitive skills of children.

2.6.3 Emotional Development

Emotional development increases children's capacity to experience and manage and express their positive and negative emotions. The development of self-esteem, sense of responsibility, taking care of other's emotions and feelings, and thinking positively are the most important areas of this domain for creating a positive self-concept in kindergarten children (Goleman, 1998; MoE, 2007b). During the last decade, theories of emotional intelligence (EI) have become very popular and the advocates of these theories (for example, Bar-On, 2000; Goleman, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1997) stated that EI is a positive quality related to intrapersonal and interpersonal functioning, physical and mental health. A central impression of emotional intelligence theory is that individuals differ in their abilities to perceive, understand and use emotional information, and these abilities contribute significantly to various forms of life success.

2.6.4 Language Development

Language development improves the understanding of words, symbols, sentences, and information around them. Human beings have the ability to learn language from very early age but the appropriate learning environment can improve to read and write the Alphabets and make small sentences in their own everyday spoken language (MoE, 2007a; Vygotsky, 1978).

The language and conversation provide a strong literacy base for a child entering kindergarten. The pre-school education curriculum concerned about increasing the children's vocabulary, acquainting them with a way of thinking and expressing,

preparing them for reading and writing, correcting mispronunciations which arise for some of them, training them on listening and implanting the love of reading and preserving books.

2.6.5 Physical Development

From birth to the age of five years is a period when a child is physically active and energetic. Children pass through obvious changes in their physical abilities and in the level of skill they exhibit in different tasks. Physical experience is fundamental to a child's motor development at this important stage therefore children need opportunities to practice motor skills and co-ordination to test themselves physically. In the classroom fine motor activities can develop the capacity of using small muscles for writing, drawing and doing small tasks (Gardner, 1993). According to Little (1995), 'Rapid physical growth generally slows down after the age of five, children in the early years need physical activity to help them comprehend new concepts' (p. 40).

The attainment of motor skills is an important part of early development. The physical development of the child is brought to its fullest potential using a comprehensive approach involving large and fine muscle skills and differing sensory abilities. Such motor development needs activity and practice to develop to a mature level. Developing the use of large and fine muscles allows children to gain control of the finer muscle group. Furnishing a large assortment of equipment and providing many opportunities for all kinds of physical activity encourages children to participate freely in this pleasure and leads to faster muscle development. Outdoor playground activities, such as, running, playing, climbing and jumping can develop their large muscles. This in turn can develop the confidence of young children. Dickerson (1987) pointed out that lack of

physical activity contributes to low levels of fitness. Physical activities need to be promoted in educational settings.

2.7 Play and Early Years Education

Early years education involves a specific set of institutions and irrespective of country a stage prior to formal education (primary school), which provides care, education and learning from the ages of about three to five (Pates, et al. 1983). Early childhood education often focuses on children learning through play, based on the research and philosophy of Jean Piaget. This belief is centred on the ‘power of play’. It has been thought that children learn more efficiently and gain more knowledge through play-based activities such as dramatic play, art, and social games. This theory exploits children’s natural curiosity and tendencies to ‘make believe’ mixing in educational lessons (Wenner, 2009). Famous philosophers and educationists considered play as a very important feature, from Rousseau through Dewey, Montessori, Froebel and McMillan to Steiner (Walsh, et al., 2010). It was a basic tenet of Froebel’s philosophy that learning comes through play, he argued that children educate themselves and develop their abilities through play. In Froebel’s view:

Just because he learns through play, a child learns willingly and learns much. So play, like learning and activity, has its own definite period of time and it must not be left out of the elementary curriculum. (Cited in Lilley, 1967: 167)

On the one hand there is the Rousseau notion that play left to itself can lead to learning, and also there is the Locke’s notion that children ‘may be cozen’d’ into learning, to use Locke’s own term (Locke, 2000: 143) - to be taught ‘without perceiving it to be anything but a Sport’. All the pioneers disagreed with directly inculcating knowledge in the play in the early years, but most from Rousseau assume an element of adult

direction and use of equipment designed specifically for learning either letters or numbers.

For some years there has been an on-going tension between academic-education versus play-based education in pre-schools. The one idea is that the curriculum hampers the teachers' flexibility to enable a greater proportion of play-based experiences for the children and the other is that play in an 'educare' system is the vital consideration for young children (Johansson, 1993). From the latter perspective, early formal instruction puts the child at intellectual risk because it requires learning by memorisation. Children may master the content to be learned, but they have very little opportunity to ask questions and find answers on their own. Al-Ghazali also pointed to the risks derived from over-emphasis on formal education:

The child must not push too far. If you do not let your child play, but insist that he learn only from books, his spirit will die and his mental processes will slow down. (Al-Ghazali, in Al-Da'imm, 1973: 37)

Children lose spontaneity and initiative in learning when their natural desire to learn is thwarted through too much teacher direction. Hedges and Cullen (2011) cite Australia's Early Years Learning Framework, as one based on the view that 'all the areas must be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities' (p.7).

In traditional English pre-schools, the rigid, subject-divided curriculum is rejected; instead, free play is regarded as the integrating mechanism that brings together everything learned (Bruce, 2011). An investigation that developed a classification of the content of play was undertaken by Sylva, et al. (1980) in an extensive study of Oxfordshire nursery schools. Sylva and her co-workers arrived at certain conclusions relating what they considered to be complex or challenging activities. They

distinguished between 'high yield' and 'low yield' activities. The most challenging activities, such as puzzles and drawing, are high yield activities compared to the medium yield activities of pretending, such as play with small scale toys, manipulating sand or dough.

Sylva et al. (1980: 48) argued that:

There are two levels of play. One merely keeps children occupied the other contributes to their educational development. Teachers in nursery schools are concerned with play at the latter level.

They identified four categories of play: 1) simple play (undertaken in a passive, rather than active manner); 2) complex play (constructive and active play); 3) Practice play (climbing, running); and 4) symbolic make believe (imaginary play providing scope for the development of social skills).

Part Two

2.8: The Preparation and Role of Early Years/Kindergarten Teacher

The National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defined the teaching practice as requiring:

...that teachers integrate the many dimensions of their knowledge base. They must know about child development and the implications of this knowledge for how to teach, the content of the curriculum – what to teach and when – how to assess what children have learned, and how to adapt curriculum and instruction to children's individual strengths, needs and interests. (NAEYC, 1996)

2.8.1 Preparation of Early Years Teacher and Teacher Training Programmes

In response to the increased demand for qualified early childhood educators in early childhood setup, many universities are being challenged to tailor make programmes and identify innovative practices that support individuals interested in pursuing such a teaching qualification (Gravis, et al., 2012:93)

Teacher training utilises learning in order to modify or change behaviour, which occurs as a result of education, instruction, development, and planned experience (Armstrong, 2003). The rationale for teacher training is the technical nature of the teaching profession and it is a continuing process. Training in this field provides the knowledge, skills, to reshape the attitudes remodel the beliefs and in a way to reconstitute the personality of a teacher (Reid et al., 2004). Buckley and Caple (2004) also indicated that training is a planned and systematic effort to modify or change knowledge, skill, and attitude through a learning experience in order to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. To perform any work effectively, good knowledge

and training are essential to acquire the skills to accomplish it successfully (Ahmed, 2008).

Research in the field of teacher training focuses on the significance of teaching practice, theoretical knowledge for teaching, and the influence of trainees' prior knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. Here according to Clark (2002) the quality of learning during the teaching practice is considered a major element in teacher education and training. A study of literature (e.g. Henderson, 1992; Startup, 1990; & the Carnegie Report, 1985) suggests the following *aims* of teacher education:

- The individual development of student teachers;
- The transmission and advancement of learning and knowledge;
- To carry out research for various purposes;
- To serve as a training school for various professions;
- To turn out trained teachers for various kinds of subjects.

Given the various aims and objectives of teacher education/training, the role of the teacher seems quite significant. According to the Robbins Report (1963), reviewing the patterns of teacher education in the U.K., comments: "What is taught should be taught in such a way as to promote the general power of the mind... (as), a nation will need leaders, particularly in administration" (p.19). Pre-service teacher education is the first and important step of professional preparation in the long process of professional development of teachers. Initial teacher training of teachers is organized at three levels in most countries - pre-primary teacher education, elementary teacher education and secondary teacher education. With regard to teacher preparation programmes, Irving (1999) asserts that pre-service training or initial training refers to all programmes that aim to prepare teachers for the school profession, whether these programmes concern subject-specific learning or teacher training curricula or both.

In other words, the concept of pre-service training refers to the process in which student teachers develop professionally, through involvement in practical education, knowledge construction and behaviour acquisition (Mule, 2006). Cochran-Smith (2001) argued that the traditional test outcomes of student teachers and their professional performance, besides their personal abilities and the impact of teacher education on their knowledge, could be the fundamental criteria for the success of the pre-service teacher education programme. However, overall the pre-service practical work and participation in a real classroom serve as the basis for all professional growth of in-service teacher experience. Tang (2003: 483) called this process of learning in pre-service education, “*a field experience*”. He regarded the field experience (real teaching) as the most important experience regarding the student teacher’s professional learning. Oh *et al.*, (2005) in their study about the impact of pre-service student teaching on teachers’ career goals, found that not only their first year teaching in the classroom, but also their experience during the pre-service training, could be very helpful as a feedback experience. They also found that pre-service teaching experience had a significant impact on job-satisfaction and teachers’ confidence in their teaching. Within this context, Romano (2005) asserted that pre-service teachers’ practice is fundamental for their development as teachers. Pre-service programmes worldwide provide student teachers with basic knowledge for teaching, which has to be kept in mind as a guideline for the field. Jones and Straker (2006) stated that:

‘The development of professional practice is most effective and beneficial when it takes place in the professional setting in collaboration with professional practitioners, i.e. experienced teachers’. (p: 165)

This view is supported by Caires and Almedia (2005) who emphasized that pre-service teaching practice could be a crucial experience directly and significantly affecting teachers’ personal and professional development in terms of consolidating new skills and knowledge, developing interpersonal skills and interaction with a new set of

situations. So far, teaching practice within pre-service education would be a key strategy in providing student teachers with adequate skills to teach. In recent years there has been a shift of focus from individual learning to more situated learning in the field of education. A new variation is school-based mentoring, which is viewed as offering new criteria for determining competence: new forms of student involvement, cooperation, contract and commitment to mentored work. In this sense, this perspective marks a new era of initial teacher education, which should enhance quality and effectiveness through depending more on mentoring and less on lecturing. Highly trained teachers in pre-primary education can demonstrate practices in a meaningful teaching learning process. Resolving contradictions and managing tensions are fundamental features of the process of engaging in developmentally appropriate early childhood education (Bredekamp, 2009; Goldstein, 2008). However, whatever strategy is used for pre-service teacher training, teaching practice in the classroom would be the most effective way for providing student teachers with professional skills and experience which enable and motivate them to start the teaching job.

2.8.2 The Role of Early Years Teachers

Ingvarson (1997) states, ‘to have the best schools, we must have the best teachers. What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn’ (p.31). Teachers can play a crucial role in implementing successfully changes and reforms in educational policies and practices (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997). They are the facilitators that set the stage with materials and resources (Rakow & Bell, 1998; Pearlman & Pericak-Spector, 1995) and model curiosity and how to find answers to questions (Armga et al., 2002). It is very important to provide qualified staff to improve early years teaching, importantly teaching staff (Sylvia et.al. 2003). The implementation

of educational policies, transaction of curricula and spreading awareness are the main areas that keep the teacher in the forefront (Bhargava & Pathy, 2014). The teacher's role and responsibilities have found extension outside the classroom, in organizing experiences for learning. The term responsibility characterizes how willing teachers are to hold themselves accountable for the learning of all their students (Halvorsen & Andrade, 2008). The teacher determines what children are interested in and what they know (Gilson & Cherry, 2004; Jones & Courtney, 2002; Smith, 2001) and this allows the teacher to organize the classroom activities effectively. The role of teachers is very central in education and rather indirectly, it includes establishing relationships with children and their parents, planning the learning environment and curriculum, supporting and extending children's play, learning and development, and assessing children's achievements and planning their next step (DfEE, 2000). The teachers also assist children in improving their language and vocabulary through discussions and conversations (Smith, 2001).

In order to fulfil all these ideas, teachers should be adequately trained to be able to communicate with children, design and manage the curriculum, understand and assess children's learning and development, and communicate with parents (Sylva et.al. 2003).

The higher the qualification of the staff, particularly the manager of the centre, the more progress children made. Having qualified trained teachers working with children in pre-school settings (for a substantial proportion of time, and most importantly as the pedagogical leader) had the greatest impact on quality, and was linked specifically with better outcomes in pre-reading and social development (Sylva et al., 2003: 4).

Davies (2008) claims that for early years teachers to become good teachers takes several years to discover and learn. He states that, 'a process of learning that generally begins with formal teacher education preparation and progresses through a many years of experiences with many children in many classrooms' (p.4).

Teaching is essentially vocational, a challenging yet fulfilling task, and teachers, in common with their pupils, remain learners. Not limited to schooling, teaching and learning mean taking one's place in the world, working with enthusiasm acting with consideration, involving oneself in responsibility (Steiner, www.steiner-waldorf.org.uk). Teachers do not act only in the classroom, where they instruct students more or less in isolation from other classes and teachers. A modern view of teaching also includes professional activities on the school level, such as co-operating in teams, building professional learning communities, participating in school development, and evaluating and changing working conditions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Teachers are expected to reveal professional commitment, motivation and effective engagement during teaching (Murdock, 2003; Yoo, 2002). This is because teachers are expected to develop their knowledge and strategies in their profession. However, in the last few decades, the transition from behaviourist to constructivist theories of learning has added impetus to the on-going debate regarding the role of the teacher within that process.

Behaviourist theories (e.g. Skinner, and Pavlov) focused only on the impartially observable aspects of learning and assume that learner is basically passive, responding to environmental stimuli. Constructivist theories (e.g. Vygotsky, Piaget and Dewey) view learning as a process in which the learner actively can construct new ideas, which can be linked with his/her prior knowledge. Here the teacher acts as facilitator. In research studies (e.g. Bulger et al., 2002; Weinnsen & Mayor, 1986), it is shown that both teachers' skills and instructional goals are treated as variables that affect learning and successful teaching can only be accomplished with the combination of both instructional goals and the skills used in accomplishing these goals.

A kindergarten teacher is often the first teacher to have contact with children, using play and hands-on teaching methods to introduce basic academic skills to children. Rodd (1998) mentions that kindergarten teachers are recognized globally as best practising advocates for young children's learning and development. According to early childhood educators, that is professionals rather than governments, one important professional task for which kindergarten teachers must be prepared is child advocacy (Whalley, 2007; Wilkinson, 2007; Rodd, 1998; Fennimore, 1989), which presupposes the acknowledgement of the influence of the social, economic and political contexts on children's development (Trawick-Smith, 2007). While knowledge of child development remains important (Bruce, 1997; Hurst, 1997), preparation for child advocacy is successful, when teacher trainees become aware of the features of the social and cultural background of each child's family and other aspects of their lives, which are affected emotionally, socially, economically, culturally and politically in their schools, community and country.

To achieve such preparation, future kindergarten teachers should know what aspects of the educational system or what other factors influencing it stop children from accessing whatever they are entitled to (Rodd, 1998; Fennimore, 1989). They must be aware of (a) the difference between what early years education as a scientific field supports and what actually takes place in schools due to the implementation of particular education policies, which involves cultivating the future teachers' critical thinking (Fennimore, 1989), (b) the differences between education policies in their countries or elsewhere and (c) the differences between educational theories of their culture and those of others. Research (Angus et al., 2004; Kirby, 2002; Hargreaves, et, al., 2001), also shows that adequate resourcing and on-going professional development are necessary for teachers to cope with changing work expectations. According to Yoo (2002), early childhood

teachers should become lifelong learners and apply their practical knowledge to philosophical approaches and new situations.

To achieve these points successfully, there is a need to understand the role of teachers in kindergarten schools in terms of: a) teachers' knowledge, attitude and beliefs; and b) the nature of pedagogy used by kindergarten teachers.

2.9 The Relationship Between Early Childhood Teachers' Knowledge, Beliefs, and Job-related Attitude

Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and practices are important for understanding and improving educational processes and there is a significant relationship among them. They are closely linked to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to general well-being, and they shape students' learning and teachers' working environment and influence student motivation and achievement (OECD, 2009). Woods (1996) proposed the notion of beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge for which he used the acronym BAK. He (1996) further argued that beliefs, attitudes and knowledge were point of a single continuum of meaning. Therefore, teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and their teaching practices are interrelated.

2.9.1 Teachers' Knowledge

If anything is to be regarded as a specific preparation for teaching, priority must be given to a thorough grounding in something to teach. (Peters, 1977: 151).

Teaching requires a multitude of knowledge and skills including: knowledge of subject matters; knowledge of curriculum; knowledge of children; and knowledge of teaching strategies. Shulman (1986b) introduced the idea of pedagogical content knowledge.

Shulman (1986b, 1987) divided teachers' knowledge into three categories: subject matter content knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; and curricular content knowledge. He further classified that pedagogical content knowledge comprises teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their subject matter knowledge. According to him (Shulman, 1986b) developing general pedagogical skills were insufficient for preparing content teachers, as was education that stressed only content knowledge. He also opined that the key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching rested at the intersection of content and pedagogy. Shulman (1987) acknowledged that 'pedagogical content knowledge is of special interest because it identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching. It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction' (p. 8). On the contrary, Turner-Bisset (1999) claimed that, 'it was impossible to distinguish between content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge; in the act of teaching, all knowledge was presented pedagogically in some way' (p. 42). She also presented a 'knowledge of self' that was not presented in Shulman's model, and demanded that this knowledge of self 'should be added to the categories of knowledge for teaching' (Turner-Bisset, 1999: 46).

The research on teaching knowledge recognized the existence of an intrinsic connection between subject matter and the methods of teaching. The centrality of the teacher in the educational process was emphasised in a report that concluded that teachers' knowledge and skills are the most influential factors in pupils' learning (Darling-Hammonds, 1989). Furthermore, Armento (1996) argues that 'teachers can integrate their knowledge, skills and dispositions to create learning environments that help children create meaning in their lives' (p.53). A framework developed by Grossman (1990) has

outlined four areas of teacher knowledge: general pedagogical knowledge; subject matter knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; and knowledge of context (p.5). In their article titled “Investing in Teaching”, Darling-Hammond and Barnett (1998) indicated that:

If students are to learn, more teachers must have both the subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills in order to help their students to reach the higher level of achievement. (p.1)

They suggested that if students are to learn to a higher standard, they need a system of skilful teachers and schools encouraging high quality teaching and learning. Shannon (1998) found that effective teaching is ‘multidimensional’ and requires educators to inspect teaching behaviours holistically to help improve quality of teaching and learning. Effective teaching ‘depends upon the interaction between the instructor’s subject-matter knowledge and teaching ability’ (Bulger, et al., 2002: 2). According to the latter authors, there are Four Aces of effective teaching: 1) outcomes-based instructional orientation; 2) clarity of instruction; 3) engagement in learning and learning by doing; and 4) enthusiasm. These four aces of effective teaching help teachers in the process of self-evaluation on their effective teaching in their classrooms. Early childhood teachers are expected to have the knowledge of new innovations and developments and use them in the classroom in ways that are beneficial for the children (Fleet & Patterson, 2003; Riner, 2000). Bruner (1974) stated that knowledge of child development is necessary but is not sufficient, and early years practice also needs a firm and sufficient knowledge base. He argued that to avoid trivializing education we needed to integrate knowledge about teaching (pedagogical knowledge) with both knowledge about children’s development and knowledge about knowledge itself.

Evidence suggests that a teacher's personal practical knowledge determines his/her decisions, rather than child development and learning theory (Ernst, 2014). Shulman (1986b, 1987), emphasised that teacher productivity should be illustrated and evaluated through pedagogical content knowledge.

Wilson et al., (1987) defined pedagogical knowledge as, 'knowledge of the substantive structures-the ways in which the fundamental principles of a discipline are organized' (p.114). Pedagogy and content knowledge are the sources that permit teachers to teach and communicate their knowledge in the classroom (Shulman, 1986a). Grossman (1990) mentioned that teachers with an understanding of the subject matter, instructional methods, and pedagogy tend to teach more effectively and creatively, which in turn reflects positively on their job-related attitudes and feelings towards the process of teaching. Al-Hooli (2001) stated that teachers' pedagogical and subject matter knowledge has a crucial influence on their attitudes (job satisfaction) toward teaching kindergarteners and the amount of time they will devote to teaching in general. Teachers' professional knowledge and actual practices may differ not only among countries but also among teachers within a country.

2.9.2 Teachers' Beliefs

Beliefs are habits of the mind in which trust or confidence is placed. Beliefs are affected by knowledge and personal attitude (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1980). According to Mansour (2009), beliefs are one of the most difficult concepts to define. Although educational literature has paid great attention to teachers' beliefs, there is still no clear definition of belief (Savasci-Acikalin, 2009). Therefore, the definitions of belief have been varied in the literature. Goodenough (1963) defined that beliefs are intentions that are held to be true and are, 'accepted as guides for

assessing the future, are cited in support of decisions, or are referred to in passing judgment on the behaviour of others' (p.151). Teachers' beliefs are thought to have a significant impact on their classroom practices. Beliefs also impact on teacher training and studies (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Sendan & Roberts, 1998; Freeman, 1993) that examined the impact of teacher education on teacher cognition have continuously reported that the expected transfer from course input to practice is greatly affected by teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs. Teachers' beliefs might be a product of their upbringing, a reflection of their life experiences, or a result of socialization processes in schools. 'It has been long understood that some beliefs are more important than others to individuals, and the more important the belief is, the more difficult it is to change' (Rokeach, 1968: 3). It is also understood that if a central belief is changed, other beliefs within the person's belief system are affected. It has been argued that 'beliefs that are linked closely to their ego-sense of self- are more important than any others' (Rokeach, 1968: 4) and beliefs about teaching are very central beliefs. Kennedy (1997) certified this state of contacts in part to the beliefs that candidates and teachers bring to teacher education.

Kennedy (1997) further said that one belief that teacher candidates bring to their professional education is, 'that they already have what it takes to be a good teacher, and that therefore they have little to learn from the formal study of teaching' (p.14). It appears that teachers' personal beliefs have a greater impact on practice than external factors (Nelson, 2000). Early childhood teachers who held stronger beliefs in basic-skill practices, such as highly structured, teacher-directed instruction, were also less likely to endorse child-centred practices, whereas early childhood teachers who had stronger beliefs in a child-centred curriculum also valued child independence and self-esteem (Stipek & Byler, 1997). Zeichner and Tabachnik (1981) stated that the thousands of

hours that prospective teachers spend as pupils in the classroom shape their beliefs. These conservative beliefs remain latent during formal training in pedagogy during the teaching/learning process.

There are broadly, two beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning, ‘direct transmission beliefs about learning and instruction’ and ‘constructivist beliefs about learning and instruction’. The direct transmission view of student learning implies that a teacher’s role is to communicate knowledge in a clear and structured way, to explain correct solutions, to give students clear and resolvable problems, and to ensure calm and concentration in the classroom. On the other hand, the constructivist view focuses on students not as passive recipients but as active participants in the process of acquiring knowledge. Teachers holding this view emphasise facilitating student inquiry, prefer to give students the chance to develop solutions to problems on their own, and allow students to play active role in instructional activities (OECD, 2009).

According to Hindman and Wasik (2008), “Teachers’ beliefs about literacy can [thus] be understood as including what they assume, think, and know about how young children develop literacy skills; what they perceive a teacher’s role in this process to be; and how they feel they should implement these practices in the classroom” (p.480). Wheatley (2002) stated that ‘teachers’ beliefs in their ability to affect student outcomes – is a crucial factor for improving teacher education and training’ (p.5). Teachers’ beliefs and practices vary between countries, between schools, and also within schools, because of different cultures and learning environments.

Eisner (1994) states that, ‘teaching is an art guided by educational values, personal needs, and by a variety of beliefs or generalizations that the teacher holds to be true’

(p.154). Consistent with this view, Wood and Bennett (2001) found that teachers' beliefs and professional knowledge are central to mediating national curriculum policies, and designing appropriate activities to achieve defined learning outcomes. Research (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002; Fleet & Clyde, 1993; McClean, 1991; Yonemura, 1986) shows that early childhood teachers have attempted to elaborate on the complex nature of early childhood teaching, examining teachers' beliefs about teaching and how their knowledge is applied to curriculum development, management of the environment and time, use of play, power and questioning, and their interactions with children. In different countries these two views have different strength and pattern of endorsement due to different national cultures and pedagogical traditions.

2.9.3 Teachers' Attitudes

In psychology, an attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours towards a particular object, person, thing and event. Attitudes are often the result of experience or upbringing. They can have a powerful influence over behaviour (Cherry, 2013). Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) described attitude as 'a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner toward an object' (p.6). Predisposition is inside (favourable or unfavourable), giving us a hidden readiness to respond to various situations and issues. Eagly and Chaikan (1993) defined attitude as, 'a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour' (p.155). Attitudes relating to any aspect of work, a work setting, or people within this setting are referred to as job-related attitudes (Greenberg & Baron, 1999).

Attitudes can also be explicit and implicit. Explicit attitudes are those that teachers are consciously aware of and that clearly influence their behaviours and beliefs. Implicit

attitudes are unconscious, but still have an effect on teacher's beliefs and behaviours (Cherry, 2013). Attitude is affected by knowledge, understanding and beliefs regarding the subject. It is also affected by a person's interest, perceived value of the subject and philosophy of learning. In fact, attitudes are learned through experience, as Koballa (1988: 116) stated with the example that, 'babies are not born with attitudes towards snakes. They may be learned either actively or vicariously. Because attitudes are learned, they are susceptible to change, but they are not momentarily transient.'

To determine teacher professionalism, teachers' positive attitude may stimulate them to do a better job and develop themselves as active human assets or human capital, which in turn would affect all the human resources of the community. Moreover, positive attitude is associated with the use of effective teaching strategies. Teachers' attitude mostly consists of motivation, job satisfaction and self-efficacy. Motivation and job satisfaction in teaching, as Latham (1998) indicated, are determined by extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. The first include salary, security and autonomy while the second (intrinsic rewards) include emotional and personal benefits of the job itself, such as personal growth, sense of accomplishment and control over the curriculum. He claimed, 'Intrinsic rewards play a greater role in teacher motivation and job satisfaction' (Latham, 1998: 82). Teacher attitudes are affected by their own comfort level, knowledge, confidence, and personal beliefs about how children learn (Cho et al. 2003). The role of the teacher is one that arranges experiences for learning and lack of interest and motivation can be the influencing factors.

The pressure on teachers, by workload, student misbehaviour, lack of parental support, weak administration and community support, associated with high expectations of goal commitment and achievement, may result in mental stress, lack of motivation and

commitment, which could be behind most of the teacher behaviour blamed for high cost and poor service and behind teacher turnover (Raju & Srivastava, 1994). Motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and self-efficacy can do far more than retain teachers. They can improve teaching, effectively achieving the learning organisation's goals, significantly reshaping the school culture, teachers' attitude and preparing responsible citizens. Job satisfaction is the emotional response of an individual towards his or her job or place of job coming out from his/her experience from the job. Luthans (2007), defined job satisfaction as, 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience' (p.141).

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1986) as, 'a judgment of one's capability to accomplish a given level of performance' (p.391). Self-beliefs of efficacy play a key role in the self-regulation of motivation (Bandura, 1997a). Self-efficacy beliefs are responsible for how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy experience enhanced human accomplishments and well being (ibid). Teacher efficacy refers to teacher beliefs that they will be able to bring about student learning. Teacher efficacy is of interest to researchers who continually investigate school improvement because the concept of teacher efficacy consistently predicts the willingness of teachers to try out new teaching ideas (Ross & Gray, 2006). Teachers with high self-efficacy expect to succeed in teaching and to handle students well, and this influences their interpretation of successes and disappointments, the standards they set and their approaches to coping with difficult instructional situations and cooperate with parents (Nir & Kranot, 2006; Ross, 1998; Bandura, 1997b). Strong self-efficacy beliefs can prevent stress and burnout and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their job satisfaction are linked to instructional

practices and student achievement (Ross, 1998; Ashton & Webb, 1986). According to Bandura (1998: 1175):

‘Among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that control their lives’.

Beliefs in personal efficacy affect life choices, level of motivation, quality of functioning, resilience to adversity and vulnerability to stress and depression (Bandura, 1997a). Beck and Murphy (1996) argued that teachers’ sense of efficacy seems to have at least two core components. The first is the belief that one is capable of doing her or his work effectively. The second is the notion that one can make a difference in some larger sense; that an individual’s work and decisions can help to bring about positive change in a system. Teachers’ attitudes, self-efficacy and job satisfaction mainly depend on and interact with their personality, personal experiences, and competencies. Teachers’ motivation, self-efficacy and job satisfaction mainly depend on and interact with their personality, personal experiences, competencies, beliefs and attitudes are slightly different across nations, and schools.

According to Richardson (1996), ‘studying teachers’ attitudes and beliefs provides a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe that structure of mental states that are thought to drive a person’s actions. Other constructs in this set include conceptions, perspectives, perceptions, orientations, theories and stances’ (p. 102). Teachers’ attitudes explain their growing interest in the process of teaching and learning, whereas, teachers’ beliefs are more cognitive that involve personal thoughts and cultural influences, whether it is true or not (Lazarus, 1991). Since teachers play a pivotal role in providing children with opportunities for literacy learning, their attitudes and beliefs directly and indirectly impact upon children’s developmental outcomes (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007).

2.10 Nature of Early Years Teachers' Pedagogy/practice

Pedagogy in essence relates to the 'how' or practice of educating, along with curriculum. How children learn and develop at this stage is subject not only to what is taught but more importantly, how it is facilitated (Anders, 2015). According to Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) the term pedagogy is applied to refer to the:

‘Set of instructional techniques and strategies, which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context. It refers to the interactive process between teacher and learner and to the learning environment’. (p: 28)

Their research (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002) provides example of teaching practices where teachers' content knowledge extended children's knowledge within a play-based environment and at a level commensurate with children's developing understanding of the world they live in.

Moyles et al., (2002) stated that,

‘The key to effective pedagogy is the ways in which principles are established and the ways that theories of children's learning and development are applied to practice, informed by values, beliefs and understandings’ (p.120).

Pedagogy is influenced by a number of factors, such as a country's ECEC system, which links to the early years school education and curriculum framework (such as the Early Years Foundation Stage in England). Therefore, pedagogical practices, techniques and strategies differ across countries and cultures. These may vary between national and regional contexts, and between individual ECEC settings (OECD, 2014). In addition, ‘factors such as staff knowledge, initial education qualifications and content, training and their competencies and skills influence staff pedagogy, as does the monitoring of quality, and process quality in particular’ (Wall, et al., 2015: 4).

Professional morality and teachers' sense of responsibility are considered the two main aspects of teaching practice. Noddings (1998) and Hansen (1993) described the teaching act as a continuously dynamic, reflective and complex decision-making process, which involves ethical and moral aspects. It has been demonstrated that quality of instruction is fundamental to student learning. However, the effectiveness of classroom practice is domain-specific as well as goal-specific; it depends on the cultural context and professional traditions. There is evidence that early childhood teachers' pedagogy and practice has changed and reformed with the passage of time.

The great concern is still with caring and nurturing. The majority of educationists pay attention to the impact of early childhood education on child's brain development, long-term learning, social skills and continuity (Mustard & McCain, 1999). During the last decade, there has been a tremendous change in early childhood education, particularly in formal settings, and these developments have changed the organizational set up and teachers' role and job descriptions (Hyson, 2001; Drury et al., 2000). Early childhood teachers are required to be knowledgeable, skilled, committed, motivated, observant, flexible and caring and a model of behaviour (Katz, 1998), and also able to engage the students in meaningful learning practices (Fleet & Patterson, 2003). Early childhood teachers are expected to have the knowledge of new innovations and developments and use them in the classroom as beneficial for the children (Fleet & Patterson, 2003; Riner, 2000). They are required to modify their teaching practices to meet the needs of different children. In this context professional development of early year teachers and adequate resources are also necessary (Angus et al., 2004). Effective use of educational resources relies on schemes and teachers' motivation and commitment. Boyer (1999) also advised early childhood teachers to read widely and develop a positive self-image.

All these developments in early childhood education change the responsibilities of early year teachers in terms of beliefs, knowledge, skills and practices.

2.11 Summary

This chapter shed light on literature related to early childhood education, the role of kindergarten teachers and their preparation. It also highlights the importance of early childhood teaching and the complex nature of teachers' work. This review has provided substantial evidence of the importance of providing high quality of early childhood education and its teacher training programmes, and consequently improving outcomes for children's learning and development. A brief synopsis has been given of child development theories, early years curriculum, and including an overview of the nature of early years teachers' pedagogy⁴. Early childhood teacher understandings of curriculum and pedagogy at the pre-school level have not been explored as extensively as in other sectors of education (Wood & Bennett, 2001).

The reviewed literature outlined how changing societal expectations and the popularisation of educational philosophies have impacted on knowledge, beliefs and practices of early childhood teachers and contributed to government reforms within the early childhood system. The literature review also confirms that the field of early childhood education is of great significance. The study also does not measure whether or not teachers' practice is appropriate but it measures the theoretical and practical aspects, which influence their beliefs and practice. Moreover, there is an interdependent relationship between teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and their practice.

⁴ The majority of literature comes from Western culture and research.

It also outlined the importance of early childhood in terms of globalization. Recognized as the worldwide growth of early childhood education and increased participation of young children in formal education settings. Providing examples of international studies have added depth to the context of this chapter, and that helped to interpret knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of teachers and student teachers, and their learning and teaching experiences in the social and cultural context within England and Kuwait.

This review has discussed the international studies about the on-going tension between academic-education versus play-based education in pre-schools. The results revealed how these two concepts were related to a society's concepts of appropriate provision for young children, and for the concept of childhood. Moreover, the study also discussed two well-established dimensions: direct instruction (teacher-directed) and constructivist approaches (child-initiated). Here, the development of thinking and reasoning processes are more important than the attainment of specific curriculum content.

Since studies related to early years education and its teacher training programmes in the Kuwait are still limited, this literature review helped to explain the early years teacher training programmes, in Kuwaiti context ⁵, based on Kuwaiti teacher trainees' competencies, which in turn helped me to build the theoretical model of the study. This model marks the important ideas of teaching and learning in early years education to be used for preparing teacher training in the field of early years education.

It is hoped that by this stage the problems, identity, focus and context of this study are clear. A detailed outline of the data collection and analysis procedures adopted during the research now follows in Chapter Three.

⁵ See Chapters Five.

CHAPTER THREE: The Research Design and Methodology

Methodology is the research design that shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes. (Crotty, 2003: 7)

3.1 Introduction

Abu Hatab and Sadeq (1991. cited in Ahmed, 2008)) identified four main ways in which research methodology in the educational, psychological and social sciences can be classified:

1. *According to the time dimension, such as Historical, Empirical and Predictive Research;*
2. *According to the size of the sample, such as the Case Study, Survey Research and Qualitative Research;*
3. *According to the use of variables, such as Correlation Research; and*
4. *According to the goal, such as Descriptive, Comparative and Development Research. (p. 55-56)*

This chapter addresses the question of how this research was carried out and also justifies each and every method/technique used. It provides a complete picture of the path adopted in undertaking this research work. It gives a detailed description of the importance and nature of research design and analyses the different research designs suited to different kinds of studies. It focuses on describing the rationale and significance of documentary, qualitative and comparative methods. Documentary analysis was carried out to obtain relevant information about current education policies and practices in early childhood education. Semi-structured interviews were used to

explore and investigate different issues. Finally, a comparative approach was used to analyse the data gathered in both case studies. The sample size and the procedure for its selection are also explained with logical justification. Besides, the tools for data collection, namely documents and interviews are not only explained but also their suitability for the study is analysed. The chapter focuses on the reliability issues relating to the data collection. In the last section, comparative techniques used in the analysis of data are explained fully.

3.2 Research Objectives

In order to determine if early years teacher knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and pedagogical practice affect classroom behaviour and interaction it was essential to establish teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical knowledge, their beliefs about teaching and learning and their attitude towards teaching. Therefore, the objectives developed in this research were:

- *'To find out how early childhood teachers perceive their preparation as a teacher, and performance in the classrooms in terms of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practice.'*
- *To evaluate whether the pre-school teacher education programmes in England and Kuwait provide an adequate preparation for all the needs of teachers.*
- *To compare these issues as between the two countries in order to identify the problems involved and indicate solutions to these problems.*

3.3 Research Questions

The aims and objectives of this study can be addressed by the following research questions.

- *‘How do kindergarten teachers perceive their preparation as a teacher, and performance in the classrooms in terms of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practice?’*
- *To what extent do the pre-school teacher education programmes in England and Kuwait provide an adequate preparation for all the needs of teachers?*
- *To what extent does a comparative study of these issues as between the two countries help to identify potential problems and indicate solutions to these problems?*

Some more underlying questions will be addressed.

- What are the governmental educational policies and early years teacher training programmes of both countries?
- How does the organization and administration of pre-school teacher education and training work in both countries?

3.4 Theoretical Background of the Research

Mouly (1978) classifies the ways with which people try to understand the world into three categories: a) experience; b) reasoning; c) research. Experience is the oldest. It relies on common-sense knowledge. It is subjective and has a limited role in revealing ultimate truth. This is because ‘experience has no control or authority over extraneous factors, which may influence the explanation of the occurrence’ (Cohen et al, 2007: 3). However, Cohen et al (2007) also argue that experience plays an important role in day-to-day life. In addition, experience is important for the formulation of objectives and research questions. Since the power of experience to reveal ultimate truth is limited, people have relied on reasoning and research in their quest for new knowledge. They become important to elucidate the objectives, finding answers to questions and the advancement of knowledge. Through research, human beings could investigate and look at the social reality. According to Cohen et al (2007), research differs from experience in that subjective belief is checked against objective reality in a systematic and

controlled manner within a deductive-inductive reasoning framework. Therefore, the hypothetical propositions are tested empirically.

3.4.1 Qualitative Research and its Philosophical Reinforcement

Research is categorised into at least two main paradigms, namely: the positivist and the phenomenological (interpretive) perspectives. These research paradigms tend to be associated with two distinct research approaches, quantitative and qualitative. The positivism paradigm uses quantitative and experimental methods to test hypothetical deductive generalisations. In contrast, phenomenological (interpretive) inquiry uses qualitative and naturalistic approaches to understand human experience inductively and holistically in a specific setting (Neuman, 2006). The former paradigm, quantitative, often occurs in a more 'controlled' setting (such as psychological or scientific experiments) and is also referred to as the 'positivistic' paradigm (Hackings, 1990). The reason for the differences between the two paradigms is because they are grounded in different epistemologies (Cassell & Symon, 1994).

Qualitative research emphasises inductive analysis, description and perception in the natural setting, rather than the focus on measurement and manipulation of variables, which characterises the experimental method of the quantitative paradigm (Creswell, 2009). It provides more understanding of the interaction of 'mutually shaping influences' and makes explicit the interacting realities and experiences of researcher and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 40) and provides insights into the participants' unique personal constructs (Shkedi, 2004). This is an appropriate paradigm to use when the study is subjective and humanistic in nature and emphasises a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. With regard to the limited role

of the scientific approach in the study of human behaviour, the interpretative perspective argues for a methodology, which 'fits' Social Sciences. Philosophically, this methodology is based on a distinction between matter and mind. Hughes and Sharrock (1997) argue that this distinction indicates that 'there are different orders of phenomena in the world which, accordingly, would have to be known in different ways' (p. 96). 'Known in different ways' for the interpretative approach means that theories and concepts tend to arise from enquiry. It differs from the so-called scientific approach because the former starts with theories and hypothesis for testing, whereas this approach is an exploratory one.

The chosen theoretical framework for this study is qualitative research, which is often referred to as 'naturalistic research' which, as mentioned above, claims that human behaviour can best be understood by exploring it in its natural settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1994: 105). The qualitative technique develops from phenomenological and interpretative frameworks where there is an acknowledgement that 'there is no clear-cut objectivity or reality' (Cassell & Symon, 1994: 2). Since an underlying assumption of the interpretive paradigm is that reality cannot be separated from human experience and knowledge of it, interpretive studies assume that all relationships between researchers and knowledge are subjective and related (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Consequently, the qualitative research approach takes 'an inductive form of inquiry' as its method (Anderson & Arsenault, 2002: 119). So, 'the phenomenological (interpretative) paradigm is more consistent with the ideals of a cross-cultural approach for studying and understanding the experiences, perspectives' (Ahmed, 2008: 64). Therefore, an interpretative paradigm was considered to be best suited to this study and its goals. In exploring individuals' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, it is important that we allow them to share these in a meaningful way and the interpretivist approach allows for this.

3.5 Research Design

Designing precedes almost every planned action. In designing, the designer plans the ways, which can help in effectively obtaining the stipulated objectives. Social research is impossible to conduct without any design. Therefore, there must be the planning of how to obtain the objectives within the existing conditions. Research design has a key role in research studies. In any field study, a researcher needs to establish an appropriate research design before commencing the procedures of the research (Cohen, et al. 2000). The ‘function of research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible’ (De Vaus, 2001: 9). Silverman (2001) mentioned that research design is concerned with how to carry on studying a particular phenomenon. He further adds that research design refers ‘to the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc. in planning and executing a research study’ (p.4).

Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 64) also give due importance to the study design and reported that the design of a research study includes the overall approach to be taken and detailed information about how the study will be carried out, with whom and where. Discussing the importance of research design, Punch (2000:66) proposed that research design is the basic plan for a piece of research and includes four main ideas. The first is the strategy; the second is the conceptual framework; the third is the question of whom or what will be studied. The forth is concerned with the tools and procedures to be used for collecting and analysing data (Bulmer, 1988). Bulmer (1988) believes that research design is a very technical stage because at this stage the researcher has to keep in mind the whole picture of the goals, the existing methods and the limitations.

For interpreting research design and making it more understandable and clear, Crotty (2003) and Kerlinger (1973) explain that research design is particularly concerned with finding answers to two questions. The first is concerned with the selection of related methodologies and methods, which can best satisfy the study's objectives and the second is concerned with the justification of these methods and methodologies. According to Clark and Yinger (1977), in order to understand what teachers do, it is necessary to look into how they express their thoughts, exercise judgment and make decisions.

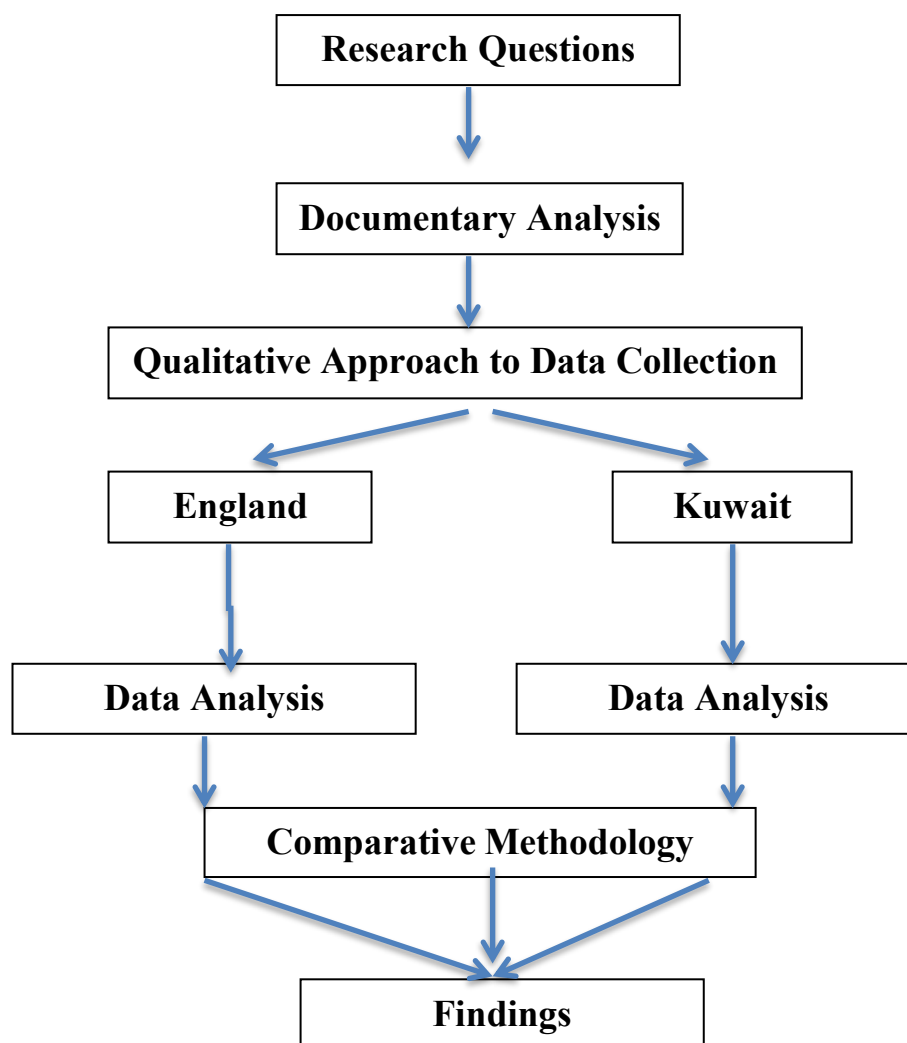
The research methodology has been divided into five phases as shown in the following Table 3.1.

Table 3.1- Five Phases of Current Research

N	The 1st Phase	The 2nd Phase	The 3rd Phase	The 4th Phase	The 5th Phase
1	Research Design 1. Documentar y Analysis 2. Semi-structured Interviews	Pilot Study Interviews=6	Data Collection Interviews=48 (24+24)	Data Analysis	Comparison
2	Identification of the Participants 1. Teacher educators 2. Student teachers 3. Practicing teachers	1. Modification of the questions 2. Change the length of the questions	1. Tape-recording 2. Transcribing 3. Interpretation	1. Coding 2. Refine the categories 3. Discussing	1. Juxtaposition 2. Simultaneous Comparison
3	Identification of providers	Sent Invitations to ITE providers	Translate the data into English from Arabic	Writing up	Similarities & Differences

Suad, 2016

Figure 3.1=Research design overview



Suad, 2016

Figure 3.1: The figure illustrates the relationship between the research questions and the selected methodologies.

The most appropriate approach that serves the needs of this research study is applied research, which is able to test the theoretical concepts of the teaching/learning process in pre-school settings. The theoretical concepts of the overall training and performance of early years teachers in terms of knowledge, attitude and belief were explored as a holistic approach to the teaching/learning process. Documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews were applied to investigate this objective. Finally, comparative

research investigates the similarities and differences in both countries' early years teachers' role and preparation. The research was carried out in Kuwait and England in three stages: pilot study; semi-structured interviews; and comparative educational research.

The study used a qualitative approach to empirical investigation, based on semi-structured interviews. Good social research involves more than the identification of a worthwhile topic and the selection and competent use of an appropriate methods, vital though these are (Gilbert, 2001). There are three major ingredients in social research: 'the construction of theory, the collection of data, and no less important, the design of methods for gathering data. All of them have to be right if the research is to yield interesting results' (Gilbert, 2001:14-15).

3.5.1 Documentary Analysis

Documents are a significant and often underused resource for research in education. An enormous range of primary documents is available for researchers to examine and evaluate. Diaries, letters, autobiographies and fictional writings offer many insights into both the personal and the public domains, while documents based on the media books, reports and proceedings of debates and committees also provide extensive source material. National archives preserve the official records of government departments, and local record offices, those of the particular location where appropriate, and in many countries around the world these are preserved carefully and methodically to store the collective memory (McCulloch, 2012). According to Scott (2006), documentary research involves the use of texts and documents as source material: government publications, newspapers, certificates, census publications, novels, film and videos,

paintings, personal photographs, diaries and innumerable other written, visual and pictorial sources in papers, electronics, or other 'hard copy' form.

Robson (2011) stated that documentary analysis is an unobtrusive measure of data collection, which may be conducted in libraries, archives, offices and such institutions of public administration. Archival documents can support research on many topics, and the scope for such research has been greatly enhanced by the online revolution of the early twenty-first century. Documentary research may frequently be allied to good effect with other research methods in education (McCulloch, 2012). 'Transcripts of interviews or completed questionnaires are examples of documents prepared by researchers for the purposes of their research' (Silverman, 2001: 119). There is also an established difference between primary documents and secondary documents, although this difference is more complex than it may at first appear. In this respect, McCulloch (2012) stated that:

Primary documents are produced as a direct record of an event or process by a witness or subject involved in it. Secondary documents are formed through an analysis of primary documents to provide an account of the event or process in question, often in relations to others. However, many documents do not fit easily into this basic dichotomy. For example, autobiographies are primary documents by virtue of the author being a witness or participant in the relevant events, but are often produced years or even decades later and so may be affected by memory or selective recall. They might also be regarded as secondary documents to the extent that they seek to analyse the changing times through which the auto biographer has lived. (p. 211)

i) Primary Sources

Primary sources are those that come into existence in the period under research (Bell, 2005). In this study these include the pre-school centres' curriculum and yearly planning review reports, and teacher training institutes' handbooks, bulletins, inspection

reports and annual review reports. These documents provided very useful information about course accreditation and certification of children.

ii) Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are interpretations of events of that period based on primary sources (Bell, 2005). These written accounts included international reports and journals, education policy documents, addresses given by Government officials, Ministry of Education Annual Reports and newspaper articles. These documents indicated the international and national views and intentions with regard to initial teacher education and training.

In this study, documentary analysis has been carried out to obtain relevant information on current policies and practices in early childhood education and its teacher education. Therefore, all documentary sources of information on these areas were collected internationally, nationally and locally in both countries.

The main intention of this empirical research is to understand the relationship between early childhood teacher training and the performance of early years teachers in terms of four features: knowledge, beliefs, attitude and pedagogical practice, I decided to take a case-study approach, as context is a vital part of the case study design. All methods used in this study were not isolated, but they were coherent with each other.

3.5.2 The Case Study

Case study is defined as ‘a strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using

multiple sources of evidence' (Robson, 2011: 136). Robson (2011) classifies case study as one of the three traditional research strategies (experiments, surveys and case study) that are used for the development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a single 'case' or of a small number of related cases. One of the strengths of the case study is its treatment of education as a social process (Goodson, 1992). 'The purpose of case study research might be to explore phenomenon about which not much is known, or to describe something in detail' (Day Ashley, 2012: 102). Not only does this recognise the importance of the teachers' workplace, but it also indicates the importance of social interaction in the school context. This interaction can only be understood through in-depth analysis of the participants' discourse and actions. Yin (1994) refers to a case study as 'empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context' (p.23). Yin (2003) further stated that a case study methodology employed as an empirical inquiry technique has the following features:

1. It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context;
2. The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and
3. Multiple sources of evidence are used.

In case study design there can either be a single case or many cases (Yin, 2003; Platt, 1988) for detail and in depth (Bulmer, 1988) investigation by whatever methods (Punch, 1998) of social entities like communities, social groups, organizations, events, life histories, families, work teams, roles or relationship (Hakim, 1992). Case studies offer rich information and different kinds of insights of the phenomenon. However, the case is more than the sum of its parts and has to be understood holistically (Thomas, 2011).

The variety of methods, that are used in the case study, provide a wealth of empirical data for an in-depth investigation. They provide a great deal of raw data (Bassey, 1999:

70). Therefore, case study is a most effective method in this situation to explore one case or a small number of cases in depth and study naturally occurring phenomenon (Thomas, 2011), also making suitable for the in-depth study of teaching practice within the classroom. The numerous methods of data collection used in case study help to penetrate into the real situation. While case studies themselves are not considered a form of data collection, they provide a means to present descriptive data gathered from different forms of observation, interviews and document analysis (Burns, 2000; Grbitch, 1999; Stake, 1997). In educational research, case studies have been employed to illustrate issues related to teaching and highlight particular teachers' professional careers (Bell, 2005; Freeman & Zlotnik Schmidt, 2000; Stake, 2000; Wellington, 2000).

This study has also chosen collective case studies to be part of the research methodology to gain a deeper insight on how teaching and life experiences impact on early childhood teachers' preparation and everyday teaching practice. In this study, case studies were considered suited to describing how key factors influence early childhood teachers' professional lives, providing a deep and meaningful insight into the complex nature of participating early childhood teachers' preparation and practice.

3.5.3 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has been defined as:

An approach to the study of the world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied. (Bryman, 1988: 46)

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) describe this paradigm as an approach, which depends on examining 'people's words and actions in a narrative or descriptive way more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants' (p.2). Qualitative

research is a genre, which can be classified into three options: a) those focusing on individuals' lived experience; b) those focusing on society and culture; and c) those focusing on language and communication (Marshall & Rossman, 1999: 60). Marshall and Rossman (1999) contend that it is a primary strategy to capture the deep meanings of experience in participants' own words.

Qualitative research emphasises inductive analysis, description and perception in the natural setting (Creswell, 2009). It provides more understanding of the interaction of 'mutually shaping influences' and to make explicit the interacting realities and experiences of researcher and participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1994: 40). The purpose of qualitative research, therefore, is to focus on understanding the people under study. This is an appropriate paradigm to use when the study is subjective and humanistic in nature and emphasises a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world.

In qualitative approaches, the researcher gets very close to the participants and gets a fuller insight into the natural life of the people. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) in this respects hold that the qualitative researcher probes the real life of the participants through detailed interviewing and observation. In contrast, they further believe, that quantitative researchers lack this capacity because they rely more on remote and inferential empirical materials. Denzin and Lincoln (1998: 3) define qualitative research as "a multi-method, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter". Robson (2011) elaborates that qualitative research helps in the provision of a detailed picture of the context and may lead to the elaboration of objectives. Qualitative data cannot be expressed in numbers because the responses are coming in sentences and

words, which cannot be converted into numerical shape. If a deliberate attempt is made to converted them, then it would lose its strength.

In the field of education, qualitative practices have been used extensively to investigate teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices (Burnaford, et al. 2001; Wellington, 2000; Loughran, 1999; Scott & Usher, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). As this study is also concerned with investigating teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices, qualitative methodology has been chosen to investigate early year teachers' preparation and role in teaching. Therefore, the study focuses on early childhood teachers' knowledge, beliefs and perceptions of experiences, and exposure to new and changing circumstances (Wellington, 2000).

3.5.4 Comparative Educational Research

To justify the comparison, the collected data were analysed through comparative methodology. There are number of methodological approaches used by educationists in their research to the study of comparative education. The primary purpose of comparative approach is to understand ourselves better in the light of the experience of others (Bereday, 1964). Getao (1996) defined comparative education as a discipline, the study of educational systems in which one seeks to understand the similarities and differences among educational systems, and this is the main purpose of this study. Comparative education's status as a discipline, as Gross (2000) describes, is frequently a contested one. Because it exists at a crossroads between qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and amalgamates elements of sociology, philosophy, anthropology,

political science, and policy studies of education, the nature and direction of comparative education can often seem vague.

Comparative Education reveals factors and agents that influence education practice, it enables future teachers to comprehend education phenomena the process of education in general and their education system (Kandel, 1955, cited in Socolova, 1990). Comparative education also sheds light on the particulars of other education systems and of their ways of teaching and educating children in terms of their historical and national conditions (Socolova, 1990). Studying, analysing and comparing education phenomena (Socolova, 1990) show the value and effectiveness of different education methods and different education systems (Planel, 2008). In fact, the significance of comparative education has been increased by the phenomenon of globalization. Larsen et al. (2008: 148), and O’Sullivan (2008: 140) expressed the views that globalization has resulted in a renaissance of comparative education in teacher education programmes at respectively, Canadian and Irish universities. Therefore, the data were analysed in relation to preparation of early childhood teachers and considered the following issues:

- The nature of teaching as a creative and caring profession, which involves early childhood teacher subject matter knowledge, skills and values;
- Teacher’s competency and quality, which refers to teachers’ qualifications for teaching and ability to manage the classroom issues; and
- Teacher beliefs and attitudes, which explain teachers’ self-efficacy.

The above indicate that teacher trainees must know how to deliver the state kindergarten curriculum and assessment. This research takes a multiple case studies approach which, according to Stenhouse (1982), gives us a ‘grounded representation of day-to-day educational reality, resting on the careful study of particular cases’ (p.10). Broadfoot and Osborne (1991) illustrate that the adoption of a comparative multiple case study approach ‘provides an ideal “laboratory” since it allows ethnocentric assumptions to be

identified and challenged by the existence of alternative and equally deep-rooted practices' in different locations and contexts' (p.71).

3.5.5 Bereday's Comparative Methodology

To organise and structure the collected data the researcher adopted Bereday's model of comparative education. 'Comparative educational studies are often divided into two categories: *area studies* and *comparative studies*. Bereday (1964) makes the following distinction between the two. He argues the former to be merely descriptive, whereas the latter does something with the data. The former, area studies, are necessary in order to have a more thorough understanding of the education systems and contexts under study. In order to achieve this, one needs to record one's impressions, both instinctive and visual, and collect sufficient amounts of data so as to have a 'rounded' picture of the context within which one is researching' (cited in Ahmed, 2008: 76).

Area studies are further divided into categories of 'description' and 'interpretation'. Description involves in-depth reading and understanding of the collected documentary evidence, such as educational policies, international reports, and government reports. These data were collected prior to the data collection (see Chapter 4 & 5). On the other hand, interpretation, as Bereday stated, consists of 'subjecting the pedagogical data to scrutiny terms of other social sciences' (1964: 19). These can be historical, political, and economic and social.

After completing these two stages, Bereday suggested simultaneous comparison. This comparison is also divided into two categories: balanced and illustrative. The first of these refers to comparing the different dimensions, and the second refers to points of

investigation for adequacy of preparation of beginning teachers, i.e. the same or equivalent information displayed in terms of international, national, regional and local levels.

Ahmed (2008) commented that ‘In practice, the researcher followed an adaptation of Bereday’s model, which extends in its execution over chapters 4 & 5. In detailed preparation for these analyses, the information gathered was summarised at each of the scales of analysis into synopsis-like statements, or paragraphs’ (p: 78). I agreed with Ahmed (2008) that collecting information tends to be a time-consuming and difficult task, especially when aspects of one system do not correlate with an equivalent in another country. At this stage, appendices may be attached to explain distinctions between or within the systems of education. According to Bereday, it could be dangerous to create similarities when none exist. Here, Bereday (1964) suggested illustrative comparison. For the current study, to use an illustrative model was useful, because some dimensions of the Kuwaiti kindergarten system could not be compared directly with the English early childhood system or vice versa.

Bereday’s approach provides a complex and sophisticated model for this total analysis as described above, but can be summarised as:

- **Description:** including the systematic collection of data from each system under examination;
- **Interpretation:** The analysis of such data in terms of the social sciences;
- **Juxtaposition:** A simultaneous review of the information in order to determine the framework within which to compare them; and
- **Comparison:** The selection of the problem, followed by the ‘total relevance’ of education in the different countries.

These processes are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

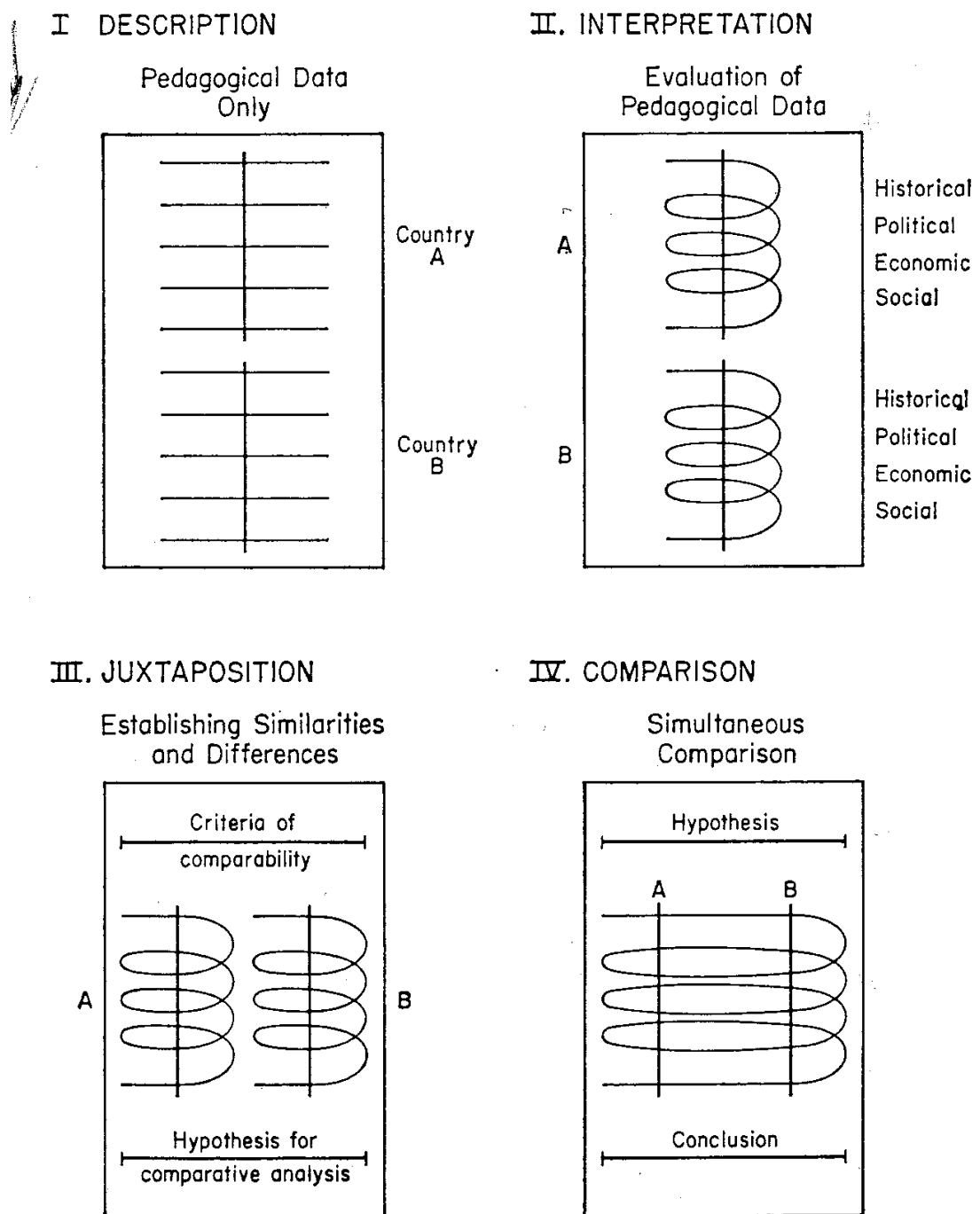


Figure 3.2: Bereday's model of comparative education.

Source: Bereday, G. (1994): 'Comparative method in education', New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston INC. p. 28

Ahmed (2008) argued, ‘Although Bereday’s model is a good working model, there is no clear direction as to, for example, how the data ought to be analysed, or how hypotheses ought to be formulated, which examine or cross-examine one’s own subjective proposition’ (p: 81). She also mentioned that, ‘the conceptual framework served as a template for the ‘juxtaposition’ part of Bereday’s method in the final analysis. It is hoped that this combined approach will also aid the development of theory’ (Ahmed, 2008: 81).

3.6 Tools for Data Collection

There are different ways of data collection but the selection of a specific tool depends upon the nature of the problem. The nature of the problem determines, which tool should be employed. This research is concerned with analysing the responses and views of the participants about the preparation of early years teachers and their role in the pre-school centres in terms of their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. For obtaining relevant and reliable answers to the study objectives, semi-structured interviews were employed.

3.6.1 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods, according to Payne and Payne (2004:175), produce detailed and non-quantitative accounts of small groups, seeking to interpret the meanings people make their lives in natural settings, on the assumption that social interaction form an integrated set of relationships best understood by inductive procedures. Qualitative data do not have any pre-determined strict structure, nor do they involve counting or scaling (standardized measures). The information is mainly collected with the help of interviews, personal observations (participant observation), field notes, audio-visual

materials, field diary, etc and are categorized or codified into different sections/groups. This categorization emerges during the process of analysis. Burns (2000:388) mentioned that 'qualitative researchers believe that since humans are conscious of their own behaviour, the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of their informants are vital'. Only qualitative methods, such as participant observation and unstructured interviewing, permit access to individual meaning in the context of on-going daily life. He further added that qualitative methods attempt to capture and understand individual definitions, descriptions and meanings of events (Burns, 2000) and more appropriate to personal and social reality (Pring, 2004).

3.6.2 Interviews

According to Burns (2000: 423) 'an interview is a verbal interchange, often face to face, though the telephone may be used, in which an interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person'. Collis and Hussey (2003:167-8) mention that 'interviews make it easy to compare answers and may be face-to-face, voice-to-voice or screen-to-screen; conducted with individuals or a group of individuals'. Interviewing plays a key role in educational/social research. Holstein and Gubrium (1997:113) argue that interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. In this respect, interviews are special forms of conversation. While these conversations may vary from highly structured, standardized, quantitatively oriented survey interviews, to semi-formal guided conversations and free-flowing informational exchanges, all interviews are interactional.

There are three categories of interviews defined by researchers: structured interviews; semi-structured interviews; and unstructured interviews (Fielding & Thomas, 2001),

although Payne and Payne (2004:131-32) classify interview into two categories: semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The format of interviews in this study was semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews, according to Payne and Payne (2004), are based on a small number of open-ended questions, the answers of which are actively and freely probed by the interviewer for elaboration. Often a sub-set of topics is listed, to help the interviewer concentrate on these issues. The questions or topics have to be put in the order that they appear on the question sheet (Interview Schedule). The respondents can then be led from a general first question to more specific ones.

Kerlinger and Lee (2000), propose that qualitative research utilizes observation and semi-structured interview for getting deep into participants' actual life and processes. Qualitative research studies a phenomenon in a more naturalistic, participatory and interpretive way. Nevertheless, while qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, rich description and explanation of a process occurring in local contexts, they can sometimes reflect weak reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994; 84).

Due to the nature of the study, the principles of qualitative research design have been used and semi-structured interviews have been adopted as the main instrument to answer the research question. Then I had to decide whether the interview is going to be structured, a focused group, non-directive, semi-structured or even unstructured (Cohen, et al. 2000: 273).

This method helped me to gain in-depth information about the pre-school teacher education programmes, teachers' beliefs and knowledge of teaching, and be closer to my respondents. In addition, semi-structured interviews provided me with an opportunity to probe what the respondents said. I also discovered and made use of

unexpected and unforeseen information, as it was revealed. I agreed with Crotty (2003) that this technique helps me to, ‘see things from the perspectives of the participants’ (p.7). The interviews were intended to elicit the views held by participants about their understanding of the questions at hand – the emic perspectives (Anderson & Arsenault, 2002). Some people cannot always simply or fluently write responses to questions about complex issues and emotionally charged topics, so the interview can be a more appropriate technique for probing such topics (Selltitz et al., 1976).

3.6.3 Interview Schedule

Generally an interview schedule contains two types of questions, closed ended and open-ended. Burns (2000: 571) argue that closed items usually allow the respondent to choose from two or more fixed alternatives. Open questions are those that allow individuals to respond in any way they wish (Simons, 2001: 93). Whatever the structure of the questions might be, it is important that the questions should be as clear as possible to convey the exact meaning. The format of the interview schedule in this study was open-ended questions. As mentioned earlier, I collected data information in both countries by myself therefore I made the interview schedule for the respondents. The six interrelated themes were derived from the research questions. The first seven questions were posed to the respondents in all categories (teacher educators, practicing teachers and trainee teachers) in both countries. These seven main questions have more underlying questions. The last three questions were asked particularly to the trainee teachers.

The questions were ordered as follows:

Q1= What is your opinion about the overall quality of early childhood teacher education in your country? How could it be possible to improve the quality of early childhood teacher education?

The first question was concerned with the quality of early childhood education systems in both countries. Issues underlying the questions included the job description of teacher educators and early years teachers; the preparation of trainees and classroom performance of teachers.

Q2= What is your perception about the early childhood education policies and current organisational structure of early childhood education and its teacher education in your country?

The second question tried to explore the importance of early childhood teacher education policies, its set up, the will of government, and the teacher training curriculum. It also explored perceptions of the effectiveness of the current early childhood teacher programmes.

Q3= Is pedagogical content knowledge necessary to empower teachers to help the students to understand the subject matter?

The question was related to the first attribute (knowledge) of trainee teachers and also practising teachers. There were more underlying question about the pedagogical content knowledge of kindergarten teachers. The answer to this question covered the important aspects of teachers' knowledge.

Q4 = What do you believe about the nature of teaching and learning at the start of the training programme?

This question was related to teachers' belief about learning and teaching. This question also covered the personal beliefs of trainees and practising teachers. Secondly, the trainee teachers revealed their negative and positive beliefs prior to coming to teacher

training institutes. By exploring this question, commonly held beliefs identified in the literature could be tested with early childhood teachers.

Q5 = How easy is it to influence the attitudes of newly qualified and experienced teachers?

This question was related to another major aspect of teachers' attributes. The majority of respondents revealed their changing attitude after completion of teacher training and their experiences during the job. The majority of teachers had experience ranging from 5 to 10 years.

Q6 = What is the impact of advanced techniques and methods during the learning teaching process? Is the duration of teaching practicum is enough?

The question was particularly for the teacher educators and practising teachers. This question covered the main area of using advanced techniques and methods during teaching practice (placements) and classroom practice (actual teaching).

Q7 = How strongly do you feel that you can make an educational difference in students' lives?

This was a very crucial question and explores the current and past constructions of early years teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards the processes involved in young children's learning. The answers were more or less the same, whether the question was asked to teacher educators in universities or early years teacher in the kindergartens. In addition, the trainee teachers had also different perspectives about this scenario.

Q8 = Do you feel that your course is preparing you adequately to deliver the early years curriculum?

This question was particularly asked to trainee teachers. I was particularly interested in the role of the curriculum in providing the best preparation for real life and decision-making roles in curriculum development.

Q9= Do you think pre-service teacher education and training enhance your professional knowledge to teach young children?

The question was related to the improvement of professional knowledge of kindergarten teachers through the teacher training programmes in both countries. I was interested to probe what kind of knowledge trainee teachers were gaining during their training programmes.

Q10= How important is the role of the curriculum in early years' teacher education? Do you feel that the curriculum of teacher education has appropriate practical application?

The question focused on two things: first the link between the teacher training curriculum and early childhood curriculum; and secondly, the link between educational theories and classroom practice. The question tried to explore to what extent the curriculum of teacher training programmes is helpful in terms of relevant knowledge, skills and understanding to teach the kindergarten classes in both countries.

At the end I asked the respondents for more comments and suggestions, or if they wanted to clarify any issue. This also gave the respondents the opportunity to add new or other interesting or relevant material to the topic in question. This 'unstructured' question at the end elicited relevant information.

3.6.4 The Procedure of Interviews

The main interviewees were: university teacher educators; trainee teachers; and practising teachers in the early years centres. All interviews were conducted in the workplaces of the respondents. The duration of interviews were between 30 minutes to 60 minutes. Prior to interviews, the researcher briefly introduced the nature of the study.

Although the interviews with all participants were conducted by face-to-face interaction at their work places and in their own language (Arabic & English), some interviewees were nervous about my intention to interview them. Then to avoid this feeling arising, I adopted an informal manner so it was easier for me to approach them. However, they have no idea of what I was going to ask, so I had to tell them my purpose and made them feel relaxed.

Before conducting the interview, I needed to prepare a schedule. For instance, I asked them to describe something about the educational system of their country, their daily routine and problems in every day teaching. If they think that existing educational system is fulfilling the needs of the students? Are they satisfied with their job? Do they enjoy their work? By using these topics individuals felt free to continue and described more about the topics, and it was helpful to achieve my original target.

To make interview successful and complete, I followed the instructions of Janesick (1998: 31-32) who recommends some prior arrangements to be made by the interviewer for interview. These include (a) possession of tape recorder and note book (b) checking its functionality (c) possession of an extra tape recorder, if possible (d) if possible,

deliver the copy of interview questions to the respondent, and (e) confirming the time, place and date of interview from the respondent.

In interview, I used different techniques to collect more information from the respondents. Audio recorder was one of the tools of data collection. Bernard (2000:204) advised 'Don't rely on your memory in interviewing; use a tape recorder in all structured and semi-structured interviews, except where people specifically ask you not to'. This helped in preparing notes from the recordings later and useful for the recordings to be transcribed verbatim into readable text. Payne & Payne (2004:132) mentioned that the transcription of recordings is probably the most tedious and time-consuming aspect of these interviewing methods.

3.6.5 Pilot Study

The pilot study involved testing the semi-structured interview schedule. The aims of this stage were to establish the accessibility of respondents, whether the techniques of data collection produced enough information, and if the research plan was well constructed or needed any changes (Sarantakos, 2005). According to Yin (2003), 'methodologically, the work at the pilot sites can provide information about relevant field questions and about the logistics of the field inquiry' (p: 80). When conducting the pilot study I got the opportunity to test my ability in interviewing skills and techniques and time duration for each category (Mansour, 2008). The pilot study for the interviews was carried out in two early childhood schools (one in each location) and two teacher training institutes (one in each country). The respondents were three early years teachers and three trainee teachers. The pilot study respondents were informed in advance about the types of questions they would be asked. I explained the purpose of the study. The

interview time for this purpose was twenty to thirty minutes. If any question raised a problem, it was deleted and an attempt made to improve the interview schedule for the final study.

After completing the pilot study, a few answers were inconsistent therefore, the question were clarified and simplified.

3.6.6 Sampling

According to Burns (2000:83), ‘a sample is any part of a population regardless of whether it is representative or not’. Payne and Payne (2004: 200) elaborated that sampling is the process of selecting a sub-set of people or social phenomena to be studied from the larger ‘universe’ to which they belong. Taking samples is inevitable in the case of a large population. It saves the researcher time and effort, and reduces the cost. Many of our everyday decisions are based on sampling; ‘possibly inadequate sampling in some cases’ (Burns, 2000: 82).

There are no hard and fast rules for sample size in qualitative research. It depends on what the researcher wants to know, the purpose of the research, what will be useful for the study, what will have credibility and what can be done with the available time and resources (Patton, 2002). The concept of sample is not confined to taking a small representative from the population. The main idea behind sampling is to study the representative small group of a population and to generalise the findings for the original population as a whole. As Burns (2000:82) explained, the concept of sampling involves taking a portion of the population, making observations on this smaller group and then generalising the findings to the large population.

Best and Kahn, (2006: 262) pointed out that:

The process of sampling makes it possible to draw valid inferences or ‘generalisations’ on the basis of careful observation or manipulation of variables within a relatively small proportion of the population.

The research population was selected using the criteria that potential respondents must work in kindergarten schools and they must have adequate knowledge of, experience of and be involved in training and administration of pre-school education.

Generalizability

According to Bell (2005), generalizability may be a problem, in the case-study approach, but the study may be relatable in a way that will enable members of similar groups to recognize problems and, possibly, to see ways of solving similar problems in their own group. The issue of generalizability in relation to the aim and purposes of qualitative research has long been widely debated and most qualitative researchers agree that the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize (see Schofield, 1993; Hammersley, 1987; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), although some argue this may be achieved (Yin, 1994). However, Williams (2002:125) stated that ‘all research must claim some degree of depth validity and generalizability if it is to be called research, rather than art’. It is beyond the concern of this thesis to engage in the debate in detail; suffice it to state that ‘this research is not aiming to generalize but rather to understand the process of comparing the competencies of early years teachers and teacher training programmes in specific contexts for the purposes of generating theory to be further tried and tested, qualitatively or otherwise’ (Ahmed, 2008: 103). Although the findings presented here may be applicable to other similar situations and contexts, I am not making any claims to generalize the findings at this stage.

Respondents

A sample is considered as representing the whole population from which it is drawn. Easton and McColl (1997) define it as “a group of people selected from a larger group (the population)”. In this study, two universities, having teacher training faculties (in each country), and four pre-school centres (two in each country) were used as samples in Kuwait and England. Below *Table 3.2* shows the details of participants.

Table 3.2: Details of Interviewees

England

	Institution 1	Institution 2	School 1	School 2	Total
Teacher Educators	4	4			8
Student Teachers	4	4			8
Practicing Teachers			4	4	8
Total	8	8	4	4	24

Kuwait

	Institution 1	Institution 2	School 1	School 2	Total
Teacher Educators	4	4			8
Student Teachers	4	4			8
Practicing Teachers			4	4	8
Total	8	8	4	4	24

Suad, 2016

The sample size for this detailed cross-country research was 48 participants (24 in each country) from both countries, including: teacher educators, early years teachers, and

student teachers. The current study focused on the nature of their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. It also focused on the professional preparation of trainees as early years teachers, their knowledge bases for teaching and learning and what beliefs they had about the early years teaching preparation and practice.

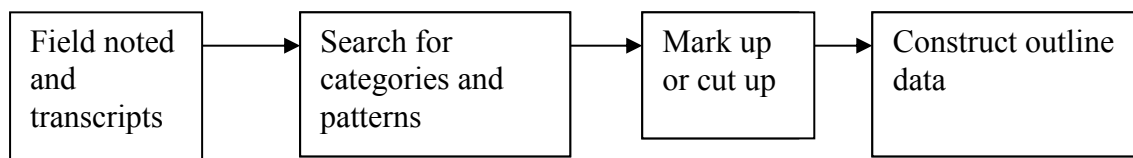
A major problem for cross-cultural research, which makes an intensive study, is to obtain access. I was granted access to the teacher training institutes and pre-school centres and permission to conduct interviews in England and Kuwait.

3.7 Analysis of Interview Data

The purpose of the interviews was to engage in dialogue with participants to elicit their perceptions. The interviews were conducted in the different institutions of both countries, and the interview schedule questions were investigated through the analysis of interviewees' responses to the semi-structured interviews. In order to identify themes from the interview data, the process of pattern coding was adopted. Pattern coding identifies themes within the data. This process pulls together large amounts of data into more workable sets (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interviews were analysed for themes as they evolved from the written transcripts. The process of analysing qualitative data involves primarily 'examining people's words and actions', which in essence means that 'qualitative research findings are inductively derived from the data' (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 121). The data analysis is an on-going research activity, which allows the research design to emerge over time. It is important to note that the data derived from the semi-structured interviews were based on the respondents' perceptions. Therefore, I tried to depict the perceptions as accurately as possible.

Analysing and interpreting qualitative data is the process of systematically organizing the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials a researcher has collected. This involves sorting, classifying, analysing, and summarising the data to identify emerging themes and patterns (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). The purpose of analysing the data is to find meaning in the data, and this is done by systematically arranging and presenting the information. It has to be organised so that comparisons, contrasts and insights can be made and demonstrated. However, the data are categorised not just to count occurrences. Instead, they are categorised to permit analysis and comparison of meanings within a category (Burns, 2000: 430).

Once translations were done, transcripts were typed and organised electronically in documents, then analytical process started. For all the interviews in this research, Fielding's (1993: 163) ethnographic data analysis model was followed. This common approach to the analysis of ethnographic data is outlined like this:



This model was applied at two different stages in this research. First, it was applied in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, and second, themes from all interviews were identified, cut and re-ordered.

3.7.1 Coding

Codes are tags, names or labels, and coding is therefore the process of putting tags, names, or labels against pieces of the data. The pieces may be individual words, or small or large chunks of the data. The point of assigning labels is to attach meaning to

the pieces of data, and these labels serve a number of functions. They index the data, providing a basis for storage and retrieval (Punch, 2014:173). Coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways (Strauss & Corbin, 2000:57). So the first stage in analysing the interview data is coding, i.e. classifying material into themes, issues, topics, concepts, propositions (Burns, 2000:432). 'Often qualitative researchers use coding to analyse their data' (David & Sutton, 2004:359). Coding is the process of applying codes to chunks of text so that those chunks can be interlinked to highlight similarities and differences within and between texts. Codes are key words, themes, or phrases that may or may not correspond to actual terms in the text being analysed (David & Sutton, 2004:203). Payne and Payne (2004:36) argue that coding organises and conceptualises the detailed components of data into patterns by use of symbols and labels to identify - and in the case of qualitative research, interpret - elements that will feature in the analysis.

Coding is not an easy task and could not be done in one go. I studied the transcriptions several times so that to get an idea and to grasp main themes of the interview. Before going to codify the collected data, I went through each interview notes and observation notes so that to get an overall impression of the data. Then I summarized the individual data by making notes, identifying important/specific words, phrases, and then selected the appropriate tags according to the themes. At this stage, I also had a list of concepts already marked out which were useful to guide me in preliminary analysis of the data. Some ideas overlapped and these were combined. Therefore, I reviewed my list to see if there was any overlap between the concepts, then extracts relating to each theme were grouped together under their respective theme. This involved evidence from two sources: documentary, and the interview transcripts. I noticed that data often fell under

two or more themes. In this situation, I placed them under both themes and finally, refined them and placed them under the most appropriate theme.

3.7.2 The Adoption of an Inductive Approach

The inductive approach adopted for this study means that ‘the data collected relates to a focus of enquiry, and hypotheses are not developed *a priori*. Therefore, there are no predetermined categories for the data. These emerge from the data through the process of inductive analysis. Inductive reasoning is concerned with moving from the particular to the general’ (Ahmed, 2008: 98). According to Bereday (1964), there are two main approaches to data analysis: analytical and thematic. The former takes the literature and theoretical background and uses them as an organisational framework, while the latter organises the data into descriptive themes. It is also possible to use both these approaches, by organising the analysis (Phase I) according to emergent themes (Phase II), and then extending the analysis to ‘examine the findings in consideration of existing literature and theory (Phase III) (p: 158). The current study used the both approaches to organise the analysis.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Although the meaning of these two concepts may overlap in some areas, they are not the same.

3.8.1 Validity of the Research

According to Bell (2005), ‘validity tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe, but this is rather vague and leaves many questions

unanswered' (p: 117). The validity of the study is based on consistency rather than correspondence (Erickson, 1986). Gaining an understanding and looking for meaning is based on the assumption that reality is not separate from the individual studies. Validity in educational and social studies is quite significant because it gives the researchers confidence in the device used. Validity in qualitative research is concerned with the trustworthiness and credibility of the results. Neuman (2003) suggested that validity, 'means there are no errors internal to the design of the research project' (p.172).

Cohan, et al. (2000: 281-82) explained that,

'Perhaps the most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimize the amount of bias as much as possible. The sources of bias are the characteristics of the interview, the characteristics of the respondents and substantive content of the question'.

To test the validity of research instruments, researchers usually send a copy of their questionnaire and interview questions to experts who can be trusted to give them an honest opinion (Moore, 2006). Therefore, I sent my interview schedule to my supervisor and some other experts for an opinion. Then the instruments were translated from English to Arabic and were tested by academic professors in the University of Kuwait, to make sure of the suitability of the questions to the Kuwaiti culture and environment. In this context, the questions were clarified and the order of the questions was rearranged.

3.8.2 Reliability of the Research

'Reliability is the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions' (Bell, 2005: 117). Ways of establishing reliability involve multiple data gathering strategies, reporting any possible personal bias, and decisions made about data and categories (Burns, 2000). Measures were taken to

enhance the reliability of the interview schedule when it was translated to Arabic from English. I tried my best to overcome any bias during the study to ensure the credibility of the study and the interview schedule was designed in such a way as to maintain an objective position and be as unbiased as possible.

3.8.3 Translations

The interview schedules were in both languages: English and Arabic. Cross-cultural research often involves translating interview questionnaires into the language of the target culture. The translation of the interview schedule was carefully done and the conceptual equivalence of words between English and Arabic was a key concern. The standardised Arabic was chosen as a model for translation. To sustain the reliability and validity of the data, professional translator was not used because I felt that participant word choice and their context could only be fully understood by myself. I was able to do that because I am bilingual, well versed in English as well as Arabic. Therefore, translations were verified by two other bilingual scholars to cross check their consistency. Translation of interview schedules in this research became important to reduce the communication barrier between my respondents and me and to collect authentic data. For analysing data, the transcriptions in Arabic were again translated into meaningful information in English. Moreover, a couple of bilingual educators were asked to translate the Arabic transcriptions into English. There translations were matched to identify if there were any inconsistency. The reliability was enhanced when a few inconsistencies were indicated in these translations (*see the Appendices 4 & 5*).

3.9 Limitation in the Methodology

In the words of Neuman (2003: 423) there are three limitations of the comparative research.

- i. It is more difficult, more costly, and more time consuming than research that is not comparative;
- ii. Comparative researchers can rarely use random sampling;
- iii. Comparative researchers can apply, not test, theory, and they can make only limited generalizations.

The writer faced some limitations during the study. A very important one was that there was a paucity of literature about kindergarten education in Kuwait as compared to England. Therefore, most of the literature review is from English and American literature. Secondly, the educational policies of Kuwait are not available on the internet or in written form; therefore, I could not access the educational policies. On the contrary, it was easy to access the educational policies of England.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Bassey (1999) classifies ethical dilemmas into three categories: 1) concerning harm to the participants and the field; 2) concerning the quality of obtained knowledge or respect for the truth; and 3) respect for democracy. Burgess (1989) claimed that the ethical principles in educational research are informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, openness and no harm caused. These three concerns were used as a guide for the ethical matters in this research because I was aware of these ethical issues when

I carried out the study. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that ethical issues may stem from the kind of problems investigated and methods used in Social Science research, which mainly refer to the problem of bias and subjectivity. Educational research, whether it is qualitative or quantitative, involves the study of human beings, their relationships and behaviour (Bryman, 2001). Zikmund (2000) stated that, 'the researcher and the participants in research situations have certain rights and obligations' (p.83) and these rights are about informed consent, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Christians, 2000; Zikmund, 2000; Cohen, et al. 2000).

Ethical issues were considered at every step of the research process to ensure that the research was conducted appropriately. The issue of ethics was a primary consideration during the entire research process. I followed every step of BERA (2011) guidelines. Confidentiality and anonymity were taken into consideration in this research. The identity of participants, institutions and early years schools were not disclosed. Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1998). For this purpose, I obtained ethical permission from the School of Education Ethics Committee, Durham University. Upon approval, letters of introduction and disclosure were sent to universities, and early childhood centres in both countries. An outline of the study and consent forms were provided and also permission sought from Ministry of Education, Kuwait to conduct the interviews with teacher educators, teacher trainees, and early years teachers.

3.11 Summary

The chapter discussed the methodology employed in the current research, with detailed explanations of the different methods of data collection and the process of analysing data, along with issues of validity and reliability. The chapter also offered an

explanation of the pilot study as an introductory stage for the main study. The chapter also discussed the theory of comparative methodology. Chapter four will provide a historical documentary analysis of early childhood education and its educational policies in England and shed light on the contemporary situation.

CHAPTER FOUR: England: History, Culture & Early Childhood Education

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. ((DCSF, 2008: 07)

4.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to discuss changes in England's early childhood education and its teacher training over time. The chapter also identifies that, as the Department of Education (DfE, 2010) affirms, providing children with good quality education and care in their earliest years can help them succeed at school and later in life. This contributes to creating a society where opportunities are equal regardless of background, and to improve early years education by building a stronger and better-qualified early years workforce.

Before commencing the discussion of the early years education system and its teacher training in England, it is important to describe briefly the background of the country, since the educational system of any country is affected by its culture, and by its social, political, and economic situation.

England comprises the central and southern two-thirds of the island of Great Britain, plus offshore islands of which the largest is the Isle of Wight. Great Britain (England; Wales; and Scotland) plus Northern Ireland constitute the composite nation, the United Kingdom. England is bordered to the north by Scotland and to the west by Wales.

Geographically, it has an area of about 93, 278 square miles (242,500 square kilometres) (England, 2013; www.intense.co.uk/doc).

The constitution of the United Kingdom is that of a parliamentary democracy and it still maintains a monarchy, headed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The constitution is to a large extent unwritten. Its rules can be found in no single written document. The law courts have developed many rules of the constitution as part of the general body of the common law. The national language is English.

Figure 4.1: Map of England



England is the largest and most populous (see the map of England, Fig: 4.1) of the constituent countries of the United Kingdom. The population of England in the 2001 Census was 49,138,831 and increased 53,012,456 at the time of 2011 census, of which

male population is 26,069,148 and female is 26,943,308 (Office of National Statistics, 2011; England, 2013; www.intense.co.uk/doc).

The political system of the UK, as mentioned before, is a parliamentary democracy. Despite the single-member district nature of UK elections, it has a multiparty system. There are two dominant parties that have alternated in power in the twentieth century, Labour and Conservative. A third party that has significant national appeal is the Liberal Democrats, and there are also several regional parties of varying strength that from time to time play a role in pressing regional demands or in supporting or otherwise a government with a weak majority at certain difficult moments. During 2010-2015 a Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government was established. In Northern Ireland there has been an 'Assembly' governing local issues, while the Scottish Parliament was re-instituted in 1999 and the Wales Assembly in 2006. Each of these local assemblies governs their education systems including teacher training. England has no such parallel and relies on the UK (Westminster) Parliament for education policy and its implementation (Wikipedia, 2014).

The traditional religion in the United Kingdom is Christianity. In England the established church is the Church of England. According to the 2011 census, about 59.4 per cent of the people are nominally Christians (though only about 10 per cent are church attendees), with the remainder divided among Muslims (5.0%), Hindus (1.5%), Sikhs (0.8%), Jews (0.5%), Buddhists (0.5%), other religions (0.4%), no religion (24.7%), and religion not stated (7.2%) (Wikipedia, 2016).

There are thousands of schools, colleges and universities. Education is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 5-16. The literacy rate of England is 99 per cent (CIA, 2014).

In Britain, governmental concern with pre-school education was expressed in major items of legislation such as the Education Act of 1944 and the Education Reform Act of 1988. The period after the 1939-1945 World War could be labelled a period of limited engagement by government. However, since 1988 and the introduction of a national curriculum, government has had to become more involved to ensure continuity between early years provision and entry into full time schooling. Wood and Attfield (1996) and Bennett et al. (1997) describe indications of tension in the system following the 1988 Education Reform Act. It was clearly a matter of concern that pre-school provision should be a build up to the start on the national curriculum. The main aim of the National Curriculum is to raise standards, making sure all children have a broad and balanced education up to the age of 16 and to ensure that schools in all parts of the country are following the same courses (Bennett et al., 1997).

4.2 Education System

In England, education is overseen by the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Local Authorities (LAs) take responsibility for implementing policy for public education and state schools at a local level. Children's education in England is normally divided into two separate stages. They begin with primary education at the age of five and this usually lasts until they are eleven. Then they move to secondary school, where they stay until they reach sixteen, seventeen or eighteen years of age. There are two parallel school systems in England, the state sector

and the private sector. The education system is divided into early years (ages 3-5), Primary education (ages 5-11), secondary education (ages 11-18) and tertiary education (ages 18+). Full-time education is compulsory for all children aged between 5 and 18 (England, 2013; www.intense.co.uk/doc).

The National Curriculum, first established in 1988, is set by the government and must be followed in all state schools. Most private schools also follow the National Curriculum, but they have more flexibility in the number of subjects on offer.

4.3 Early Childhood Education

‘Providing children with good quality education and care in their earliest years can help them succeed at school and later in life. Early Years teachers are specialists in early childhood development, trained to deliver the early years foundation stage for children from birth to five’. (NCTL, 2015)

Great Britain has pioneered the early childhood education movement. In 1816, Robert Owen (1771-1858) established the first nursery school in New Lanark, Scotland. He emphasised free and unstructured play in early education. The Education Act (1870) had a great impact on elementary schools and in 1880 elementary education became compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 13. Nursery school education originated in Britain with the work of Margaret McMillan (1860-1931) and her sister Rachel McMillan, who in the late 19th century established pre-school education in the local authority state schools. Their emphasis was on health care, hygiene, exercise and fresh air and this method still influences some aspects of current English early childhood education (Curtis, 1998). After the 1st and 2nd World Wars, there were fewer opportunities to increase the numbers of nursery schools and throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, non statutory preschool provision was neglected and undeveloped (Young-Ihm, 2002).

A growing body of research suggests that ECEC generates a higher rate of return on public intervention than later stages of education, and even more so for disadvantaged children (Taguma et al., 2012). Historically, in England, there was little government intervention in pre-school provision, in curriculum, and in curriculum implementation. Recently in order to raise standards and improve the quality of early childhood institutions, government intervention in early years education has increased significantly. In 1996, the government introduced a framework for an early years curriculum: *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education* (SCAA: 1996), which were revised as Early Learning Goals (QCA, 2000). This framework is very goal oriented and specifies a large number of learning goals to be achieved by children (Young-Ihm, 2002).

In England, early childhood education and childcare encompasses a wide range of services. Formal provision includes different forms of nurseries (day nurseries, nursery schools and nursery classes), playgroups, children or family centres and child-minders (DfE, 2013b) and also many children are looked after by grandparents, friends, neighbours, nannies or other home carers (Naumann, et al., 2013). 'Early childhood education has changed, in just over two decades, from a grounded and evolving response to meeting the learning needs of young children into a hastily constructed response to modern policy' (Nutbrown, 2002: 5). In recent years early childhood education and care in the UK has been subject to significant reform and the way in which it is governed and regulated has been significantly restructured (Wood, 2008).

4.3.1. The Changing Era- 1980-1997

In the 1980s and 1990s in the United Kingdom changes in family structure, children's behaviour and advances in technology were seen to challenge teachers' abilities to cope with change (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997). These changes come through policy changes, the 1988 National Curriculum, thorough inspection process, Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003b) and acquiring Early Years Professional Status. 'The British Government through its report 'Starting with Quality' (DES, 1990) recognized the importance of children's early years for development and for the need for quality carers' (Miller, 2002: 17). To improve the quality of early childhood education, care and delivery of services, The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project was commenced in 1997 (Sylva, et al, 2003).

The White Paper on education, 'Education: A Framework for Expansion' (Department of Education and Science, 1972), proposed that nursery education be provided for all who wanted it. It stated that by 1980 there would be nursery school places for 50% of 3-year olds and 90% of 4-year olds, but throughout the 1970s and 1980s, pre-school provision was neglected and undeveloped. In the 1990s, the importance of early childhood education was realised and the Rumbold Report 'Starting with Quality' (DES, 1990) and Royal Society of Arts Report, 'Start Right' (Ball, 1994) were launched. The 'Starting with Quality' Report (DES, 1990) recommended a curriculum based on eight main areas of learning: 1) aesthetic and creative; 2) human and social; 3) language and literacy; 4) mathematics; 5) physical; 6) science, 7) spiritual and moral; and 8) technology (DES, 1990). The 'Start Right' Report (Ball, 1994) recommended that high-quality provision be made available to all 3- and 4-year olds, reviewing evidence that high-quality early education leads to lasting cognitive and social benefits

in children. Ball (1994) stated five main areas: 1) an appropriate early learning curriculum; 2) the selection, training, and continuity of staff; 3) high staff children ratios; 4) buildings and equipment designed for early learning; and 5) a partnership role for parents.

In 1996, the first stage of Nursery Vouchers, linked to a set of guidelines for pre statutory settings: Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), was introduced by the Conservative government. This scheme marked significant changes in the national policy agenda and politics of early childhood education. The Voucher Scheme allowed parents to use vouchers worth up to £1,100 per child for up to three terms of part-time education for their 4-year-old children, in any form of pre-school provision. In order to register for the receipt of vouchers, pre-school providers had to show that they were moving children towards the Desirable Outcomes as defined by the SCAA (1996). The Desirable Outcomes were 'learning goals' that children should achieve before they enter compulsory education. Its main features were early literacy, numeracy, the development of personal and social skills, and contribution to children's knowledge, understanding, and skills in other areas. At that time, raising standards and improving quality in early childhood institutions were public priorities in policy making (Young-Ihm, 2002).

In 1997, the incoming Labour Government abolished the Voucher Scheme and made its own plans for the development of early years services. The new government tried to raise standards and significantly increased public funding for early years education. The government provided direct funding to pre-school institutions for part-time places for 4-year-old children and an increasing number of part-time places for 3-year-old children.

However, the receipt of this funding for 3- and 4-year-old children was dependent on each pre-school provider meeting government requirements for the regular inspection of pre-school settings, in terms of the framework of Desirable Outcomes, revised as Early Learning Goals (QCA, 2000).

4.3.2. The Start of the New Era -1998-present

Post 1998, the close relationship between education and care has been emphasised in official documents. For example, the National Childcare Strategy says, 'there is no sensible distinction between good early education and care'. In practice, however, further integration has been limited. Moreover, in late 2002, responsibility for early education was distributed between the Department for Education and the Department for Work.

To meet the needs of children and their families, the Sure Start Project (1998) was started by the Labour government, to promote the health and development of young children through local authorities working with local communities (Drury et al., 2000). The aim of the Sure Start Project was to give children the best possible start in life through improvement of childcare, early education, health and family support, with an emphasis on outreach and community development. The purpose of this project was to work with parents and pre-school children to promote the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of children- particularly those who are disadvantaged (Roberts, 2000: 436). The Project proposed about 200 local programmes concentrated in areas of deprivation, but not confined to poor families. Although it was well received in 1998, the programme was abolished due to several reasons. The most important reason was that not all disadvantaged children live in deprived areas, so each small Sure Start programme could serve only a minority of disadvantaged children; those from adjacent

areas could not participate, and local authorities and health agencies were faced with relatively well-financed early years programmes in one part of their domain and much less well-provided areas next door (Glass, 2005).

Two government documents published in 2003 and 2004 outlined the shift from Sure Start to children's centres. First, *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003b), a government strategy addressing young children in the round, proposed a shift from centrally controlled targeted Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) to children's centres (Bouchal & Norris, 2014). Second, the *Ten Year Childcare Strategy* (DfES, 2004b) concluded that children's centres would form part of the government's drive to increase the quality and availability of childcare and services for young children and families. In 2003, the government committed to delivering 3,500 children's centres across the country by 2010, and it successfully delivered the 3,500 children's centres on time. Sure Start children centres were designed to deliver a place in every community that would provide integrated care and services for young children and their families, with a particular focus on closing the achievement gap for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Bouchal & Norris, 2014).

The age when education authorities have to provide education—the age for statutory provision – is five. That means that early years provision is non-statutory. That is, it may be provided by education authorities through nursery schools, or taking children into primary schools before the age of five. Alternatively, charitable agencies or other providers may receive grants from local authorities. However, there is no legal requirement on local authorities to make such provision. In kindergarten and pre-school services, the regulated staff-child ratio is 15 children per kindergarten teacher in England (Taguma et al., 2012).

Pre-school education in nursery classes or schools is fully funded by local government for children aged between two and four. In the UK, childcare centres, playgroups, nursery schools and nursery classes within primary schools can provide pre-school education. Private voluntary or independent (PVI Sector) nursery education is also available throughout the UK and varies between structured pre-school education and a service offering child-minding facilities (Wikipedia, 2015).

Bruce (2011) commented that the main principles of traditional early years education in England are child-centred, in contrast to the traditional subject-centred and teacher-directed approaches of secondary education. Young-Ihm (2002) divided the key underlying principles of English traditional early childhood education into four parts: individualism; free play; developmentalism; and the child-centred perspective of the adult educator. The principles of current philosophy are based on the Education Reform Act; Desirable outcomes and early learning goals; and Inspection.

4.4 Educational Policy Network

‘Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is receiving increased policy interest in England as improving quality in the ECEC sector is a subject of growing importance’. England considers improving quality through family and community engagement as a priority, as co-operation between the ECEC sector, parents and the community can contribute to providing a more continuous child development process. (Taguma, et al., 2012: 7)

Policies and guidance are usually based on a combination of ideas of well-known theorists, even if the links are not explicitly made (Wall, et al., 2015). The history of the last two decades presented the slow but firm development of early childhood education in Great Britain and became central to educational and social change (Nutbrown, et al., 2008). ‘The country’s state educational system offers a time tested model for Universal

pre-school education' (Swiniarski, 2007: 19). The Education Reform Act 1988 not only changed the history of primary and secondary education, it also had a positive impact on early childhood education. In the words of Nutbrown, et al., (2008: 16):

'In the last twenty years alone, from 1988 to 2008, there have been at least 20 major new policies, which apart from their individual effects have, as a whole, changed the shape and status of early childhood education almost beyond recognition'.

In England there has been tremendous change in early childhood education over the last decade. Sure Start, a project established in 2003 by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), offers a framework for caring for infants and children from birth to age three at home, in extended school programmes and centres. The theme for Sure Start, 'Birth to three centres' is embedded in its mission. The project goals are to develop 'a strong child, a skilful communicator, a competent learner and a healthy child' (DfES, 2003a). The government realised the importance of pre-school education and the two Green Papers: Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003b) and Every Child Matters: Change for Children (DfES, 2004a) were published in this context. Every Childhood Matters (DfES, 2003b) has policies on education, safety, health, happiness and doing well in society. This document stated that every 3-year old is offered a fully funded place at a nursery or pre-school for 15 hours per week. Some early-years settings take children from as young as two and a half years. Children benefit from three hours of structured play, developing relationships with other children and learning basic social skills that will prepare them for school. These Green Papers led to the Children Act 2004. This Act was improved further and the Childcare Act (DfES, 2006a) was implemented. The document emphasised the need for high-quality, well-trained and educated professionals to work with young children. The early years outcomes provisions in sections 1-4 the Childcare Act 2006 (the Act) place a duty on English local authorities (LAs) working with their NHS and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) partners, to improve the five Every Child

Matters outcomes of all young children (0-5) in their area and reduce inequalities among children, through integrated early childhood services- underpinning a Sure Start Children's Centre for every community (DfES, 2006a).

In 2006, the UK Government released the *Children's Workforce Strategy* (DfES, 2006b), which outlined an approach for improving the skills, knowledge and qualifications of the workforce (DfES, 2006b). In the state schools of UK, an ECE teacher should have at least a bachelor's degree with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) by doing Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and a one year Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) or four-year degree in higher education.

These Acts worked as strong foundation for the Early Childhood Education. To produce more effective long term outputs another circular, *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* (DCSF, 2007a) was implemented, emphasising to provide excellent education to children with the collaboration of their intended outcomes. The document revealed 6 strategic objectives to improve children's lives:

- Secure the health and wellbeing of children;
- Safeguard the young and vulnerable;
- Achieve world-class standards;
- Close the gap in educational achievement of children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond; and
- Keep children and young people on the path to success. (DCSF, 2007a)

In 2008 the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008) was implemented for the children aged 0-5 and it was stated that 'a child's experience in the Early Years has a major impact on their future life chances' (p.7). The Education Act of 2007 made

tremendous changes in the set-up of education system in general and in early childhood education in particular. It was stated in this act that, the families of children would be responsible for their children's education and must be involved in supporting and caring their children (DCSF, 2007b). Therefore, now Early Childhood Education is one of the priorities of educational policies in England. There are a few other very important bills and legislations covering childcare and early education.

The policy paper (updated in 2015), 2010 to 2015 government policy: childcare and early education (DfE, 2010), published under the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government, emphasised extension of early education to those who need it most, and giving parents greater choice of childcare. The policy emphasised improving the quality of early education and childcare by improving: the qualifications of the early years workforce and introducing early years educator qualifications in September 2014; introducing Teach First⁶ in the early years; working with Ofsted to reform the inspection system and challenge weak providers; and simplifying registration arrangements for early years providers, while keeping controls to make sure children are safe (DfE, 2010).

In January 2013, a paper 'More great childcare: raising quality and giving parents more choice' (DfE, 2013a) was published and included detail on planned reforms:

- Raise the standard and quality of the early years workforce;

⁶ A two-year leadership development training programme designed to deliver social and economic change by addressing educational disadvantages. Teachers work in challenging early years, primary or secondary schools in England and Wales. The inspirational teaching and leadership is key to helping every child succeed, regardless of their background. Since 2002 over 7000 graduates have joined the Teach First Leadership Development Programme (LDP) in schools across England and Wales and helped change the lives of thousands of young people in low-income communities.

- Give high-quality providers the freedom to offer more places;
- Give parents more choice.

Lloyds (2015) commented that, ‘over the last five years early years policymaking remained complicated by the continuing split concerning responsibilities for early education and for childcare at the level of central government’ (p. 144).

In July 2013, to help working parents access childcare, the Department for Education published another paper, ‘More Affordable Childcare’ 2013 was a very important year in the history of early years education. In the same year the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) published new criteria for early years educator qualifications and the Teachers’ Standards for Early Years, which provided the detail of the standards new early years teachers have to meet (NCTL, 2015; DfE, 2013b). The Department for Education (DfE, 2013b) introduced Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) and early years teacher training, which replaced the Early Years Professional Status Programme.

4.5 Early Childhood Curriculum

The curriculum is one of the quality indicators of pre-school education. The term curriculum is used to describe everything children do, see, hear or feel in their setting, both planned and unplanned (DfEE, 2000). Designing a curriculum for pre-school education in different countries creates a dilemma for the ECE professionals and policy-makers because, ‘Curricula can become “sites of struggle” between ideas about what early childhood education is for, and what are appropriate content and contexts for learning and development in early childhood’ (Soler & Miller, 2003: 57).

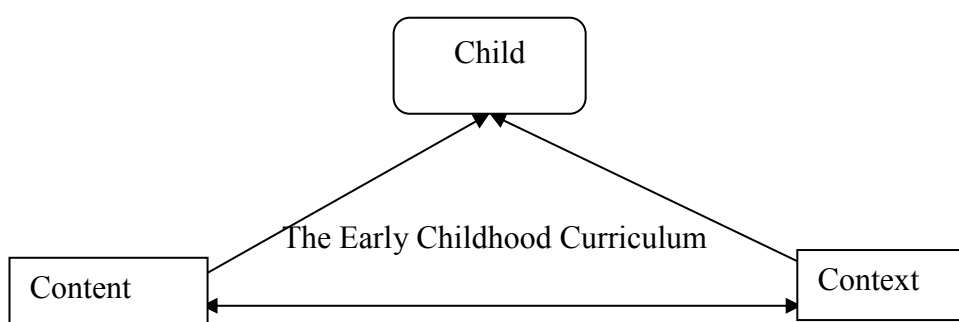
The national curriculum policy in England, introduced for the first time in 1998, extended the pre-school phase with the intention of establishing progression and continuity with Key Stage 1 (age 5-7). A new Foundation Stage was introduced which included 3-4 and 4-5 year old children, and was accompanied by Curriculum Guidance (DfEE, 2000). The Curriculum Guidance provided illustrations and guidance on planning, assessing and teaching in these six areas of learning which form the basis of the Foundation Stage curriculum: 1) personal-social and emotional development; 2) communication-language and literacy; 3) mathematical development and education; 4) knowledge and understanding of the world; 5) physical development and physical education; and 6) creative development (Riley, 2007). Each area of learning has a set of related early learning goals and is considered very important for improving child development, understanding and knowledge (Riley, 2007). It was proposed to help experts plan to meet the diverse needs of all children so that most will achieve and some will go beyond the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. Development was hypothesized on 'meeting the diverse needs of children', including those with special educational needs, and with English as an additional language. This was accompanied by a Foundation Stage Profile (DfES, 2002) to be completed at the end of the Reception Year (Wood, 2004). The Profile has 13 summary scales covering the six areas of learning, which need to be completed for each child receiving government-funded education by the end of the Foundation Stage (DfES, 2003b).

According to Bruce (2011, 1987) rich learning environments have three aspects, the 'three Cs' of early childhood curriculum, each of which interacts with the others (see Fig. 4.2).

Content: What the child already knows; what the child needs to know; and what the child wants to know.

Context: People, culture, race, gender, disability, complex needs, special educational needs, poverty, access, materials and physical environment, outdoor, indoors, places, events, principles embraced of diversity and inclusion (Bruce, 2011:64).

Figure 4.2: Three component of early childhood curriculum



In England, traditionally early childhood education has been child centred, with an emphasis on individual children's interest, free play and first hand experiences. In 2000, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2000) published Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. The curriculum guidance was intended 'to help practitioners plan to meet the diverse needs of all children so that most will achieve and some, where appropriate, will go beyond the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage' (p.5). The curriculum guidance sets out the content of each area in three parts: (1) Stepping Stones; (2) Examples of What Children Do; (3) What Does the Practitioner Need to Do? The text of the 'Stepping Stones' sets out the early learning goals for each area of learning. The examples of 'What Does the Practitioner Need to Do' show how the practitioner can structure and provide appropriate activities (Young-Ihm, 2002).

In England, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2008: 7) say that:

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. ((DCSF, 2008)

For example, in England, the Sure Start policy aimed to provide pre-school centres, which focus on children and their families, and provide access to education, health, and social services (Sylva & Pugh, 2005).

In England, the 'Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage' (EYFS) represents the national curriculum, a mandatory framework for ECEC in England for children between birth and compulsory schooling age. The Department of Education is responsible for the development and implementation of the EYFS. The EYFS took effect in 2008, after the consolidation of previous frameworks. The newest and latest version took effect as of 1st September 2014. This is less prescriptive than previous versions and has been adapted to leave more room for interpretation and implementation for staff (Wall, et al., 2015: 82). The EYFS reshaped its learning areas and goals in accordance, where possible, with the baseline for the national curriculum, aligning it more closely with primary education (ibid, 2015: 83). The EYFS has seven learning areas, under three overarching ones: communication and language; physical development; and personal, social and emotional development. It also designates four specific areas: literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design (DfE, 2014). Goals are defined in each area, and children are assessed on these goals at age 2 and before making the transition to primary school, resulting in an individual EYFS profile for every child, which is passed on to the parents and primary school teachers (DfE, 2014). Moreover, there are non-statutory guidelines for

practitioners and inspectors, titled ‘Development Matters; and ‘Early Years Outcomes’. These are intended to help professionals implement the EYFS statutory guidelines and inform them about child development and development outcomes through the early years (Wall, et al., 2015: 83).

4.6 Goals: Areas of Learning and Development in EYFS

‘In recent trends towards re-conceptualising early childhood education, the focus has shifted from essentialist views of ‘the nature of the child’ towards broader theoretical frameworks that explore social, political and cultural constructions of childhood’. (Wood, 2008: 1)

The nursery schools in England follow the Early Learning Goals, set by the Early Years Foundation Stage, for education produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families which carries on into their first year of school at the age of four. This year of school is usually called Reception. The six areas covered by the early learning goals, that is, the knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of five are personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development (Langston & Abbott, 2010: 88) ‘None of these areas of Learning and Development can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to child development’ (DCSF, 2008: 11).

The learning goals of the Foundation Stage were in major developmental areas instead of curriculum content targets. Standardized testing was replaced by a comprehensive outline of developmental tasks. In this context, the majority of early teacher educators agree that the outline is an improved device over prior approaches to early year

assessments (Swiniarski, 2002-2005). The *Foundation Stage Profile* is a defined colour-coded checklist of the child's developmental growth from age three to five. It is important to note that children are not expected to follow a prescribed sequence. Through observations teachers assess each milestone the child achieves at his own rate. The profile follows the child from pre-school through his reception years as a cumulative record that documents continuity in the learning process (DfES, 2003b, cited in Swiniarski, 2007).

The Foundation Stage is a distinct phase of education for children aged 3-5 in all forms of pre-school settings and following seven areas of learning and development which form the basis of the foundation stage curriculum. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. These areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas are the prime areas and overlapped with the previous versions:

- 1) Communication and language;
- 2) Physical development; and
- 3) Personal, social and emotional development (DfE, 2017; DfE, 2014).

Providers must also support children in four specific areas:

- 4) Literacy;
- 5) Mathematical development;
- 6) Knowledge and understanding of the world; and
- 7) Expressive arts and design (creative development). Each area of learning has a set of related early learning goals, which need to be completed for each child receiving government-funded education by the end of the Foundation Stage (DfE, 2017; DfE, 2014).

The goals show that ‘The emphasis is on the child, rather than the curriculum content. Teaching strategies emphasized the child’s well being in the instruction of content-based knowledge and skills’ (Swiniarski, 2007: 21).

1) Communication and language

‘Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations’ (DfE, 2017: 8). Language is used to communicate with others, to share and express feelings, to give and obtain information, and to understand ideas and develop thoughts. In Vygotsky’s (1978) terms language is an important factor during the learning process of young children. His theory emphasises the development of language as a ‘higher mental process’, including all forms of intelligence and memory (Garton & Pratt, 1998). According to EYFS language is a social process to communicate with others. Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment. It also develops the children’s confidence and skills in expressing themselves.

2) Physical development

‘Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food’ (DfE, 2017: 8). The early learning environment should have fun activities which help children’s ability to control and use their body well and also to use equipment which helps their physical development, like climbing

frames, balls, or slides. The motor development of children is divided between ‘gross’ and ‘fine’ motor development. ‘Gross’ motor development refers to all spatial movements used by children to manoeuvre around their environment, such as crawling, sitting, walking and eventually running, jumping and climbing. ‘Fine’ motor development concerns all of the smaller and more intricate movements, such as grasping, building a tower with cubes, putting objects into boxes, drawing and writing’ (Palaiologou, 2010: 179).

3) Personal, social and emotional development

‘Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities’ (DfE, 2017: 8). With these developments, children in early learning environments learn about their own personal and emotional issues and how to get on socially with others. During learning and development process of children these factors play an enormous role and become an important issue and a priority in the government’s agenda. These competencies involve helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their abilities (DfE, 2014).

4) Literacy

The term literacy relates to both reading and writing, and suggests the simultaneous development and mutually reinforcing effects of these two aspects of communication. ‘Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest’ (DfE, 2017: 8). Literacy development is seen as emerging from children’s oral language development and their initial, often unconventional attempts, at reading and writing.

5) Mathematical development

Mathematical concepts are important for everyday life and they develop slowly in the young child. ‘Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems, and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures’ (DfE, 2017: 8). It is stated in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (DCSF, 2008: 14) that,

‘Children must be supported in developing their understanding of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy in a broad range of contexts in which they can explore, enjoy, learn, practise and talk about their developing understanding’.

Needham, (2010: 154), describes the mathematical development of a child as:

‘The process of telling the time, spending money, mentally budgeting for the week, measuring making comparisons, interpreting diagrams, reading timetables, undertaking simple calculations, looking at comparative relationships, applying logic and undertaking simple arithmetic are quite literally inculcated into the myriad of daily decisions that people make’.

With mathematical development, stories, games, imaginative play and songs are used to help children's development and understanding of basic mathematical ideas and concepts, such as numbers, counting, shapes and space.

6) Knowledge and understanding of the world

It is acknowledged in DCFS (2008: 9) that, 'every child is a unique individual with their own characteristics and temperaments' and that 'early relationships strongly influence how children develop'. This aim of EYFS reflects that every child has the right to grow up in healthy, safe and positive environment.

'Children must be supported in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world. Their learning must be supported through offering opportunities for them to use a range of tools safely; encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real life situations; undertake practical "experiments"; and work with a range of materials' (DCFS, 2008:14).

'This competency involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment' (DfE, 2017: 8). This covers areas such as people's beliefs and different cultures and different types of technology and how it is used. It encourages children to ask questions, for example, why things happen and how things work. According to Barnes (2007:1), 'Our experience of the world is cross-curricular and everything which surrounds us in the physical world can be seen and understood from multiple perspectives'.

7) Expressive Arts and Design (Creative development)

Creative development is also an important learning goal and classes help children to explore their own creative ability. ‘Children’s creativity must be extended by the provision of support for their curiosity, exploration and play. They must be provided with opportunities to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings, for example, through a variety of art, music, movement, dance, imaginative and role-play activities, mathematics, and design and technology’ (DfE, 2017: 8; DfE, 2014: 7-8).

All classroom activities are now based on content knowledge and instruction skills and these skills are defined separately for all six goals and areas. This developmental sequence is called stepping-stones. ‘These stepping stones identify developing knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes that children need if they are to achieve these early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage’. (2013: www.qca.org.uk)

4.7 Early Childhood Teacher Training

Taylor et al., (2006: 59) concluded that:

Qualifications and training of staff are key indicators of the quality outcomes for children in ECEC programmes, assessed using measures across the developmental spectrum (emotional, social, cognitive, language, and physical). There is a wealth of empirical evidence supporting the association between quality care and qualified staff.

Woodhead (1999), Chief Inspector of schools, argued that adults working with 3-and 4-year-old children need to use a formal approach and direct teaching: ‘Direct teaching is crucial at this age as it is at other age’ (p.10). On the other hand, many early childhood advocates (e.g., Drury, et al., 2000; Anning, 1998) have expressed concern that the

government policy of raising standards may lead to over-concentration on formal teaching and upon the attainment of specific learning targets.

To teach in a maintained school in England, qualified teacher status (QTS) is necessary. This is obtained by passing an initial teacher training (ITT) course. The most common ITT route for graduates, unless their first degree is a BEd or BA/BSc (QTS), is the Primary Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with an early years specialism. For the early years specialism, a degree in early childhood studies, education studies or psychology with a significant element devoted to young children may be an advantage. Early Years teachers will be specialists in early childhood development, trained to work with babies and young children. They will be graduate leaders responsible for organising and leading high quality practice in early years settings. The Government wants to attract and retain the best people to work with young children. Early Years Teachers will be specialists in early childhood development, trained to work with babies and young children from birth to five. The selection criteria for these pathways are:

- A Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) (previously Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)) check which shows that they do not have a criminal background that might prevent them working with children and have not previously been excluded from working with children;
- Achieved a standard equivalent to grade C (or above) in GCSE mathematics, English and science;
- Demonstrated that they are able to read effectively and communicate clearly and accurately in English; and
- Have the right to work and study in the UK for at least the time they are in training. (DfE, 2013b)

Training providers must also ensure that: all trainees hold a degree by a United Kingdom higher education institution (or recognised overseas equivalent) before assessment for Early Years Teacher Status is complete.

Currently, there are four Early Years Initial Teacher Training routes available through the universities and early years providers, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Early Years Initial Teacher Training routes

	Pathway	Typical Candidate
1	Graduate Practitioner Pathway (GPP)	A graduate currently working in the sector who requires a small amount of learning or experience before they can demonstrate the Teachers' Standards (Early Years). Part Time
2	Undergraduate Practitioner Pathway (UPP)	A current employee working in the sector with a level 5 qualification, e.g. a foundation degree in early years. Part time.
3	Graduate Entry Pathway (GEP)	Someone with a degree and limited experience of working with children from birth to five but who is looking to pursue a career working in early years. Full time.
4	Undergraduate Entry Pathway (UEP)	An undergraduate undertaking a degree in Early Childhood Studies. Full time.

Source: Department for Education (2013).

4.8 Accountability or Inspection

The government introduced, as part of the developments in early years education, inspection of pre-school settings, by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED). OfSTED is a non-ministerial governmental department, independent of the Department of Education. It inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. Every week, OfSTED carries out hundreds of inspections and regulatory visits throughout England and publish the results online. It also helps providers that are

not yet of good standard to improve, monitors their progress and shares with them the best practice (OfSTED, 2015a: www.gov.uk).

OfSTED is responsible for accountability of all nurseries, schools and early years provision receiving government funding in England. Every type of pre-school setting that receives funds from government is required to undergo an inspection by OfSTED. The aim of the OfSTED inspection process is to assure government, parents and public that funded nursery education is of acceptable quality (OfSTED, 2001). OfSTED regulates a range of early years and children's social care services, making sure they are suitable for children and potentially vulnerable young people (OfSTED, 2015b: www.gov.uk).

4.9 Pedagogical Strategies

Eisner (1994: 154) states, 'teaching is an art guided by educational values, personal needs, and by a variety of beliefs or generalizations that the teacher holds to be true'. Moyles et al., (2002: 120) stated that 'the key to effective pedagogy is the ways in which principles are established and the ways that theories of children's learning and development are applied to practice, informed by values, beliefs and understandings'. In England the project 'Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years' (REPEY) (Siraj-Blatchford, et al., 2002) has provided detailed understandings of a wide range of pedagogical strategies and techniques that affect child outcomes. It has distinguished between pedagogical interactions (specific behaviour of teachers and parents) and pedagogical framing (planning, resources and routine). The finding of this project showed a specific relationship between play-based pedagogy and high quality provision, for example:

- Effective pedagogues model appropriate learning, values, and practice, encourage socio-dramatic play, praise, encourage, ask questions, and interact verbally with children;
- Effective pedagogy is both ‘teaching’ and the provision of instructive learning and play environments and routines;
- The most effective settings provide both teacher-initiated group work and freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities;
- Excellent settings tend achieve an equal balance between adult-led and child-initiated interactions, play and activities;
- The most highly qualified staff provide the most direct teaching alongside the kind of interactions, which guide but do not dominate children’s thinking;
- Teachers stimulate children’s activity and talk through ‘sustained shared thinking’ (Wood & Attfield, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002).

According to these findings there were two main characteristics of good quality provision: teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. It was a challenge to the traditional debate between these two directions. Skilled educators can and do make a difference to children’s learning and developmental outcomes. Therefore, ECE has been influenced by these challenges to curriculum and instructional methods.

In England the Department for Education is responsible for providing guidelines for ECEC. The Early Years Foundations Stage curriculum sets statutory standards for providers in ECEC and provides quality and consistency (DfE, 2014). England is one of the few governments to base its national pedagogical guidance for teachers on practices. In England although pedagogical approaches and practices are not specified in the curriculum framework, pedagogical practice is assessed by inspectors regarding its impact upon children’s learning, development and well-being (Wall et al., 2015). England’s EYF statutory framework emphasises a play-based approach with individualised learning and integrated activities. The approach is based on child-centred and constructivist perspectives (Siraj-Blatchford & Nah, 2014).

‘England’s Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the curricular document for teaching during children’s early education and care. This curriculum does not include any explicit guidance for staff on pedagogical practice and does not prescribe a pedagogical approach, but sets out some parameters that frame pedagogy’ (Wall, et al., 2015:4). It also ‘promotes balance between the development of academic and literacy skills, socio-emotional development, and creative and physical development, and so implicitly encourages practitioners to adopt a wide range of domain-specific learning techniques’ (ibid, 2015: 5). In 2008, a practice guidance booklet, ‘*Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*’ was developed, which emphasised sustained shared thinking and scaffolding practices.

Although there is no explicit guidance for staff on pedagogical practice in the curriculum framework, pedagogical practice is assessed by inspectors regarding its impact upon children’s learning, development and well-being. Apart from not much guidance, ‘pedagogy in England has several strengths. It promotes continuous child development for the whole ECEC age range, by implementing a single curriculum framework; it emphasises age-appropriateness and play in pedagogy; employs different approaches and practices that provide more flexibility for staff; and has a robust monitoring system that even monitors process quality’ (Wall, et al., 2015:7). In England the quality in pedagogy, is defined at national level and based on two parameters: the indicators used by Ofsted, the national inspectorate; and the Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes. The overall quality and standards of the early years provisions, is judged by OfSTED on three main dimensions: a) how well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend; b) the contribution of the early

years provision to children's well-being; and c) the effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision.

4.10 Summary

This chapter has provided the context for this study, and focused on conception of ECE in England through giving an overview of early years education and its policy network in England. It is an admirable point that England is one of the pioneers of early childhood education and its efforts in this area are supported by an extensive body of research and England is on the front line of an international movement of Universal pre-school education aiming to give every child that promising start in life (Swiniarski, 2007).

The chapter discussed the historical changes in early years education and its teacher training during the last twenty years in England. It also discussed the six areas of the early years curriculum.

The next chapter will discuss the historical development of early years education and teacher training development of Kuwait and discuss the basic philosophies of kindergarten education.

CHAPTER FIVE: Kuwait: History, Culture & Early Childhood Education

5.1 Introduction

Kuwait is located in the north western part of the Arabian Gulf, Kuwait shares borders with two Arab states: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the South and South West and Iraq in the North West. Kuwait lies in a semi-tropical region with a total area of about 17, 820 Km² according to the United Nations Statistics Division.

The State of Kuwait is a constitutional emirate with a semi-democratic political system. The hybrid political system is divided between an elected parliament and appointed government. The Emir, Sabah Al Sabah is the head of state, whose powers are defined in the constitution. Kuwait is among the Middle East's most free countries in civil liberties and political rights. The Kuwaiti constitution is the main source of legislation in Kuwait. It was promulgated in 1962 and has elements of presidential and parliamentary systems of government. It sets the rules, values and regulations related to organizing the social, economic and political life, which should be considered by both the individual and the society. Islam is the religion of the State; the Islamic Sharia is the main source of legislation.

According to the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), Kuwait, (2016), the population reached 4,344,760 persons, 2,658,423 of whom were males and 1,685,460

were females. Among the whole population Kuwaitis represent 31.3 % and 68.7% are non-Kuwaitis. Currently the population growth rate is 1.7%.

Figure 5.1: Map of Kuwait



The whole population literacy rate in the State of Kuwait is 96.13%, and among males it is 96.87% (1762318 persons) and for females 94.98% (1094022 persons) for the academic year of 2014-2015. Youth literacy rates are 99.58% and 99.49% for males and females respectively. The overall literacy rate is 99.54%. The youth literacy rate definition covers the population between the ages of 15 to 24 years (Kuwait Population, 2016). The whole population illiteracy rate in the State of Kuwait was 3.9% and among Kuwaitis was 2.5% for the academic year of 2011-2012, an improvement compared

with the previous academic year of 2010-2011, where the percentage respectively were 4.4% and 3.1% (Ministry of Education, 2012). The comparison shows that Government of Kuwait has great interest and commitment to developing education to keep up with global development.

The country has some social, health, and education policies and programmes but the process of evaluation and follow-up as well as monitoring with quantitative and qualitative indicators are still below the required level by international standards (UNESCO, WCECCE, 2010).

5.2 Challenges and Obstacles

Education in the State of Kuwait is facing a set of challenges:

Political and Economic challenges: Kuwait lies on the Arabian Gulf, which is a globally important strategic location. It thus lies in an area of tension and continuing conflict due to the importance of its location and natural resources. Faced with this challenge, the people in charge of the educational system in Kuwait seek to accommodate all the variables and the facts surrounding it. Pursuing a democratic approach, education is entrenching principles of democracy and respect for the Constitution, laws and regulations through political education, curricula and behavioural practices as in the case of elections in schools and the teaching of some articles of the Constitution in the curriculum. Education also seeks to strengthen the education concepts of national unity and strengthen the spirit of citizenship, loyalty and belongingness to the homeland (MoE, 2004-2008).

The State of Kuwait relies on one basic source of income, which is oil and it is being depleted. Therefore, it is permanently looking for alternative sources of income. Foreign investment experience and success is evidence of the value of other alternatives to the source or the specific statute. Therefore, Kuwait imports most of its needs and the majority of all goods, making the local markets is linked to global markets and affected negatively and positively. Educators also do not lose sight of consumer behaviour, which constitutes an economic challenge for education (MoE, 2004-2008).

Cultural and Social challenges: The cultural challenge is one of the most serious challenges because it is simply related to thought, the values and trends. Due to rapid changes, which are beginning to be felt in the lives of citizens regardless of the school, the government seeks to create leading and serious curricula about upholding national identity and consolidating positive values and the renunciation of negative ones, taking advantage of everything that is new and useful in cultures and global development. The Ministry of Education is seeking to absorb this challenge well in order to achieve its educational and humanitarian message.

To avoid social conflicts, the Ministry of Education has worked to eliminate tension and social conflicts wherever they are, by all available means, and developing the lasting sense of patriotism with an emphasis on learning social skills which are considered as one of the most important means of communication and cohesion among members of society (MoE, 2004-2008).

Technological and Cognitive challenges: Due to technological changes and developments all over the world, the Education Ministry is trying to take advantage of

technology in the components of the educational system and the educational environment.

The information revolution, or the explosion of knowledge, is one of the challenges facing education in our current age. Knowledge accumulation and accelerated scientific discoveries, in addition to severe partial specialties made those in charge of education search constantly for how to deal with them, so the Ministry of Education is seeking to take advantage of available knowledge, or make it functional, rather than just filling the minds of learners with information (MoE, 2004-2008).

The country has some challenges, such as lack of effective regulatory and quality control, inadequate training of teachers, shortage of training and specialized academic programmes, shortage of early intervention programmes, and lack of strong public commitment.

5.3 The Education System

The State of Kuwait gives a great deal of attention and seeks constantly, in all its plans, policies and strategies, to develop and modernize its educational systems. Kuwait's recent strategy for the development of education (2005-2025) was a step on the path of development and modernization in which it focused on the importance of meeting the challenges posed by the nature of the age, in the forefront of which are globalization, and the demands of the information and technological revolution and openness to the world. A number of contemporary issues have been given particular attention, such as the use of technology in education and due care to democracy, respect for the constitution, respect for the opinions of others, pledging allegiance and loyalty and

adherence to national identity with an openness to other cultures and taking advantage of its positive aspects. The Ministry of Education has given attention to diversifying education to include general and private education, the qualitative university education, professional and applied education. It also has given attention to training to raise the efficiency of teachers and developing their expertise and skills (MoE, 2004-2008).

The educational system in Kuwait is organized according to a general organization through which the trends of the educational process are specified as a prelude to achieving the philosophy and goals of education in Kuwait. The regulatory process is carried out by dividing the educational system into formal and non-formal education.

Formal education is supervised by the Ministry of Education, it includes: 1) Public education; kindergarten, primary and secondary stages. 2) Qualitative education; this includes religious education, which concentrates on the Sharia sciences and Arabic language along with the subjects of general education; adult education and special needs education. 3) Private education: carried out in private schools, which are equal to the stages of general education.

Non-formal education; is overseen by some government institutions and ministries, as well as some private institutions that provide training certificates. Besides that supervise this education are Kuwait University Centre for Community Service & Continuing Education, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The Kuwait educational ladder consists of five stages (MoE, 2009):

- 1) Kindergarten—a two-year course for ages 4-6;
- 2) Elementary---a six-year course for ages 7-12;

- 3) Intermediate---a four-year course for age 13-15;
- 4) High (secondary)---a three-year course for ages 15-18; and
- 5) University and colleges.

Despite government schooling being readily available, many Kuwaitis choose not to send their children there, and instead enrol them in private schools. There are a number of private schools available and many have foreign sponsors and are co-educational. In Kuwait, the government does not wholly fund private education, although it is generously subsidized. The Kuwaiti Government pours more than KD 5.6 million per annum into private educational facilities, in addition to allotting land for school construction and distributing textbooks (MoE, 2009).

5.4 Early Childhood/Kindergarten Education

The Holy Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] said that,

‘The right of a child over his parent is that he should give him a good name, make his manners good, and teach him the Qur’an. Love your children and have mercy on them’. [Vasa’il, v.21. p.483]

Much of the concept of early childhood education has been subjected to Western values, beliefs and practices. However, it is essential to consider the different social context, political system and structure of education in every country, as well as societal and cultural beliefs about teaching children.

The child is influenced by the type of care he/she receives from the family and also the other institutions in the society. He/she is also influenced by the type of education received when joining education institutions. Therefore, Kuwaiti society emphasises

children and childhood and pays them attention because the children of today are the adults of tomorrow, investing in them is exactly an investment in the future, and the level of care offered to them by the State at the present time will have a positive impact on the future of Kuwait. Since the beginning of modern civilisation in the early 1950s, the State of Kuwait worked hard to provide appropriate housing for Kuwaiti families, mainly for the sake of the children. The State also provided them with health and prevention centres, built more kindergartens and equipped them with trained human resources and the latest equipment, and worked on enlarging the capacity of these kindergartens to accommodate the children. The five-year development plan 1984/85 - 1989/90 included projects for child care that represented an extension of this positive trend towards raising Kuwaiti children (Al-Mesh'an et al, 2001).

The history of early years education in Kuwait can be divided into two phases, a period when it was not the concern of the government-a 'hands off' period, and a 'hands on' situation, with detailed prescription of what should be taught, and concern that teachers were under-performing. The history of kindergarten education started in 1954 when two kindergarten schools, Al-Mohalab and Tareq, were founded in Kuwait (Al-Ghafoor, 2004). The Kuwaiti pre-school system has undergone several changes since the 1950s and the education provided has been developed and improved. The Ministry of Education continues to make every effort to offer a better education to Kuwaiti children. For this purpose special buildings were constructed to achieve advanced international standards, and the curriculum of the kindergarten was subjected to continuous upgrading (Al-Ghafoor, 2004).

The number of kindergartens increased year after year due to the attention the State of Kuwait paid to the children of the age group prior to primary schooling and the number

of children admitted to kindergartens has risen constantly. The attention paid to kindergartens in the State of Kuwait was represented in the content of the final report issued by the Sub-Committee for Preparing the General Education/ Kindergarten Draft Law. The report stated that Kindergarten in Kuwait is an education stage distinct from the other stages, which is supported by the State and supervised by the Ministry of Education; the State provides it with the necessary resources to carry out and realize its planned mission and objectives appropriately (Al-Hadhoud, 1993).

Besides, the kindergarten stage in Kuwait became vital due to the rapid social, economic, and cultural developments as well as the changes Kuwaiti society is experiencing. Moreover, continuity, support and development of this stage is considered a civilized phenomenon advocated by the contemporary educational and psychological studies in respect of the importance of early childhood and its impact on the future of both the individual and the society (Al-Hadhoud, 1993). Kindergarten in Kuwait has its own philosophy, which is based on four principles: to integrate the religious and social set-up; to meet the challenges of the global modern world; to fulfil the changing needs of Kuwaiti families; and to develop the personality of Kuwaiti children (Al-Mesh'an et al, 2001).

In Kuwait the pre-school system is divided into two sectors, state kindergartens and private kindergartens. Early childhood education, in the public sector, consists of two stages, KG1 and KG2, covering the ages 4 to 6 years. KG1 is for children aged 4 to 5 years, and KG2 is for children aged 5 to 6 years. Typically each classroom contains two teachers⁷, a class teacher and an assistant teacher, although both hold the same qualification that is a bachelor degree, and the same salary. Each teacher is strongly

⁷ All kindergarten teachers are female in Kuwait.

affected by the schools' culture and philosophy. Pre-school education in Kuwait is not compulsory but free for all Kuwaiti citizens.

Kindergartens strive to provide the appropriate conditions for the development of the child physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and socially, in accordance with the child's abilities and needs (UNESCO, 2010/11). The kindergartens in the private sector, are further divided into two groups: Arabic and foreign kindergartens. The latter have their own structure, curriculum and policy, depending on the educational system they follow and the country of origin and do not follow the Kuwaiti Government curriculum. The Statistics Department of Ministry of Education (2009) revealed that, during 2005 to 2009, despite the fee at British and American private kindergartens, the enrolment of Kuwaiti children in such kindergartens increased dramatically.

Although there are many objectives of the kindergarten curricula in Kuwait, they can be classified into three developmental aspects: emotional aspects; psychological-motor aspects; and intellectual aspects. These objectives are translated into behavioural goals to be achieved through the various activities, experiences, beliefs and attitudes. It is imperative to discuss briefly the philosophy of early childhood education in Kuwait before describing the efforts to develop early childhood education.

5.5 Philosophy of Kindergarten in the State of Kuwait

‘Kindergarten goals in Kuwait are almost the same as those in the United States and Europe...derived from the philosophy of early childhood education, such as maturanist, behaviourist or interactionist’. (Hatch, 1987: 13—cited in Al Hooli & Al Shammari, 2009)

In light of the aforesaid, the kindergarten philosophy in Kuwait is defined by Ministry of Education, (2009) as:

1. Originating from the Kuwaiti society, which believes in Islam as a religion and way of life;
2. An Arabian philosophy in agreement with the reality of the Kuwaiti society;
3. Believes in the role of the family in the education process;
4. Believes in the role of sciences in modern society;
5. Promotes the spirit of belonging to the group, family and environment;
6. Believes in the child is a whole that cannot be divided;
7. Respects the child's individuality and believes in his/her dignity and rights as a human being;
8. Works towards developing self-confidence, initiative, innovation and self-independence;
9. Believes in the individual differences amongst children;
10. Believes in the importance of developing the child's senses and perceptions;
11. Calls for employing the existing education techniques on the basis of free play and self-action together with the intended education; and
12. Believes in the necessity of linking the activities and experiences with the reality of the society and the aspired future (Al Hooli & Al Shammari, 2009).

5.6 Objectives of Kindergartens in the State of Kuwait

This philosophy had a great impact on forming the general objectives of kindergartens, which include developing the child's character in spiritual, mental, physical, emotional and social aspects, and providing him/her with skills that will assist in personality integration, according to the General Education Objectives document for kindergartens issued in 1982. Kindergartens aim to develop children's capacities for interaction and communication, encourage them to discover their environment, and provide them with social and moral guidance in a safe environment (UNESCO, 2006). The Kuwait Ministry of Education, (2007a) set the objectives as follows:

1. To help children gain religious beliefs and ideas;
2. To assist the children in acquiring a sense of belonging; to their family, society, the Arabian Gulf, and the whole Arabian Islamic nation;
3. To promote strong self-esteem;
4. To help children acquire the means to be honest and positive in their relationships with adults;
5. To help children learn responsibility and independence, and learn the acceptance of living in a cooperative society;
6. To give children positive inclinations towards the environment surrounding them;
7. To help children become aware of their physical needs, keeping their bodies safe and healthy, to teach them to practise healthy habits in playing, relaxation, sleeping, eating, and dressing, and to assist them in learning the habits of security at home, outside, and within the kindergarten;
8. Developing all their senses;
9. Instilling some basic skills necessary for life; and
10. Expanding their interests and perceptions about the environment surrounding them, and also positive interaction. (MoE, 2007a)

These goals are reflected in the kindergarten curriculum, which is presented in the following section.

5.7 Curriculum of Early Childhood/Kindergarten Education

‘A curriculum helps to ensure that staff cover important learning areas, adopt a common pedagogical approach, and reach for a certain level of quality across age groups’ (Gahwaji, 2006: 67).

The main philosophy of kindergarten is, 'Learn through Play'. According to this philosophy, the child should be free to develop intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally in a secure, interesting and motivating environment (Al-Hooli & Al-Masaad, 2004). Kindergartens aim to develop children's capacities for interaction and communication, encourage them to discover their environment, and provide them with social and moral guidance in a safe environment (UNESCO, 2010/2011; 2006). 'Children are taught about and through language, literature, arithmetic, natural science, music, art motor skills, role-play, and creativity' (Al-Hooli & Al-Shammari, 2009: 388).

The early childhood curriculum is based on the scheme and philosophies of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which gives children more freedom in the classroom (Al Shatti, 2011). The curricular content includes twelve themes: My kindergarten; I am human; People work; My nutrition; Water and air; Animals and plants; The four seasons; My religion Islam; My country; Kuwait; Communication and transportation; Oil; and The sea (Al-Hooli & Al-Shammari, 2009: 388). Each theme used in Kuwaiti kindergartens runs for two weeks at a time. Throughout the school year the Ministry of Education plans the themes, and provides teachers with a 'Teachers' Theme Manual' to help them plan or choose their lessons. There are ten objectives set by the Ministry of Education (MoE) Kuwait for kindergarten education, which are consistent with the overall educational policy of Kuwait. To achieve these objectives the MoE in Kuwait established five areas of learning in the pre-school curriculum: 1) the religious area; 2) the mental intellectual (cognitive) area; 3) the physical and dynamic area; 4) the creative development area; and 5) the emotional area.

i) The Religious Area

The objectives of pre-school education in Kuwait are based on the Islamic religion. All of the children in KG1 commence their studies in Arabic. Islamic teaching is a basic and fundamental aspect of the kindergarten curriculum. Religious education also aims at initiating social tendencies and noble Islamic values such as: compassion, truthfulness, honesty, cooperation, work perfection, parents' obedience, cleanliness, helping the weak and observing the neighbour's rights.

Arabic Language: Children begin by extending their vocabulary and learning songs and rhymes. Later in the KG2, they learn the letter sounds and begin to read and write in Arabic. This helps prepare Arab children for the Ministry Arabic curriculum, which begins in Year 1 of primary school and prepares the non-Arab students for their Arabic for Foreigners curriculum.

ii) The Cognitive (Mental Intellectual) Area

The children are encouraged to use their knowledge and skills in all other areas to solve problems, generate new questions and make connections across other areas of learning and development. Mathematics is a very important part of a child's development; therefore early years children should be exposed to a variety of mathematics-related experiences and materials. These activities include making sets, sorting, matching, classifying, making patterns and counting. All Numeracy work is of a practical nature in early years centres.

iii) The Physical & Dynamic Area

There are arrangements in the schools for children to take part in physical education, which helps to develop co-ordination, control, movement and manipulation skills. The children learn basic ball skills, gymnastic skills, dance, athletics and how to work as a team.

iv) Creative Development Area

Music, Art, Role-play and Imaginative play are the main components of creative development. The music teacher has to play some instruments during the music class. Children are introduced to rhymes and songs related to their themes and intended to extend their language. Playing roles in Imaginative play is part of children's creative skills development.

v) The Emotional Area

The tendency is for social and emotional development to be studied together, as they are linked and reinforce one another (Palaologou, 2010). This is an extremely important area of learning for early years children. It focuses on developing positive relationships with adults and other children, developing independence, developing a positive attitude to school and learning and feeling valued and admired. The early years in a child's life are very important to shape his/her personal, social and emotional development. These key issues are very important aspects of pedagogy in Early Childhood Education. At this stage the parents and teachers have a significant impact on children's well-being.

The National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), a semi-autonomous organization is currently involved in a number of initiatives and research studies based on the Kuwait context and related to the sustainable implementation of the 2035 Vision. Early childhood initiatives include a pilot project to use the Reggio Emilia model in kindergartens and also making kindergarten mandatory. For this purpose, ‘a group of teachers from Kuwait’s government kindergartens attended workshops to be trained in the Reggio Emilia model’ (Winokur, 2014: 107)

5.8 Efforts of the State of Kuwait in Implementing the Improved Approach

The officials and those in charge of kindergarten in the State of Kuwait paid attention to improving the method of work in this phase of education, and adopted the latest educational techniques and methods that would realize efficiency and success in childhood education and teaching process, and also selected what is best for children in this age from teaching curriculum and methods that are consistent with the modern education trends in this field (MoE, 2009).

The efforts of the Kindergarten General Technical Control in the State of Kuwait had a key role in selecting the Improved Approach as a modern trend that has been implemented in many kindergartens in developed countries due to its effectiveness and impact on the teaching and upbringing of children (Al-Essa, 2000). The *Improved Approach* depends on the child’s proficiency in the teaching setting. Children learn by themselves through controlled activities and organized experiences, set out according to a curriculum, which observes children’s different characteristics and fulfils their mental, psychological and physical needs through an interesting educational environment, rich

with topics and materials representing the local environment (Al-Ghafoor, 2004). The intention is to achieve interaction and communication between the child and the environment of his/her local society, and also a teacher qualified and capable of taking appropriate decisions according to the freedom s/he enjoys and her/his expertise in choosing the best methods that enable the children to learn according to their capabilities and needs (Al-Ghafoor, 2004). The Kindergarten Technical Control, in selecting the Improved Approach aimed to achieve the following points:

- Children's proficiency and positive attitude in the education setting so as to achieve the concept of children's self-motivation;
- Focusing on the teacher's performance and flexibility in preparing the learning activities and settings;
- Altering the classroom's educational and learning environment as well as organizing it in a manner that achieves self-motivation for the child in the learning process; and
- Rectifying matters that need modification and improvement in the applied method of work so as to achieve better results in the learning process. (MoE, 2009; & 2000/2001)

The procedures for selecting and implementing the Improved Approach have undergone the following phases:

- In school year 1998-99, some female senior technical controllers were sent to some Arabian and Gulf countries to attend training courses at kindergartens to observe the latest educational techniques in the field of child teaching and upbringing;
- The General Technical Control in school-year 1999/2000 selected five kindergartens from each educational district to trial the Improved Approach for early years education in order to execute the project of improving the method of work in the kindergartens;

- The General Technical Control, in collaboration with the control bodies in the educational districts, set out a practical plan to implement the experiment of the Improved Approach and apply it completely through the following steps:
 - A- Holding meetings with the female technical controllers and principals of the selected kindergartens to explain the Improved Approach and the procedures of its execution.
 - B- Organizing training courses to prepare the female technical controllers and supervisors in order to execute the Improved Approach.
 - C- Conducting typical lessons for the female technical supervisors and the instructors of the experimental kindergartens with the aim of identifying the possibility of executing the Improved Approach and also diagnosing the positive and negative aspects during the implementation process.
 - D- Preparation of training courses by the Kindergarten Technical Control at the five educational districts for the female teachers and technical supervisors for the purpose of arranging the implementation of the Improved Approach and for setting up the kindergarten classrooms to unify the Approach in all kindergartens.
 - E- The Improved Approach was then adopted by all the kindergartens in the State of Kuwait in the school-year 2000/2001 following its success and acceptance by the teachers and technical controllers as well as the parents. (Al-Ghafoor, 2004; Al-Hooli & Al-Masaad, 2004).

The implementation of the Improved Approach in the kindergartens had the impact of promoting the educational and teaching process, mainly in terms of the experience and instruction offered to children in additions to the fact that this Approach organises the roles of both the teacher and the child, thus realizing efficiency and a positive attitude within the educational setting (Al-Hooli & Al-Masaad, 2004). As such, this Approach seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- To perceive the child as a biological living being with independent identity who possesses multiple aspects of development and holds attributes and

characteristics that distinguish him/her from his/her peers, which are represented in his/her inclinations and aptitudes.

- 2- Developing the personality of the child as well as the linguistic, social and psychological advancement by encouraging the child to interact and communicate with the people surrounding him/her (teachers, children, workers), since interaction has a key role in developing the language of the child and in achieving social development.
- 3- For the child to be the focal point in the education process.
- 4- For the child to have a role and efficacy in the teaching setting.
- 5- To promote the children's learning skills such as the skill of research and ambition towards exploration.
- 6- Promoting the teacher's performance and granting her more freedom and responsibility in preparing the teaching setting to be consistent with the children's capabilities and needs.
- 7- For the environment surrounding the child together with its elements and components to represent one of the effective factors from which the child derives information and experiences that push him/her to learn from the interaction between him/her and the tangible and human contents of the environment.
- 8- For the parents of the children to take part in the learning process and also to make use of those parents with experience and specialist skills to assist in the process and offer their expertise and know-how. (Al-Hooli & Al-Masaad, 2004; Al-Essa, 2000).

5.9 The Integrated Experience Methodology

In the international literature, the term ‘integration’ is used to describe the process of creating a network of services that work together, and is seen as a means of improving effectiveness while reducing public cost (Haddad, 2002). Notwithstanding the implementation of the Improved Approach in the kindergartens as an advanced method and modern trend in early years education, the methodology adopted for executing this Approach is the Integrated Experience method together with its content of old and new topics and experiences ((Al-Hooli & Al-Masaad, 2004; Al-Essa, 2000). The method is compatible with this Approach and contributes towards implementing its most important pillars and procedures of execution (Al-Ghafoor, 2004). Some important features are as follows:

- For it to be suitable for the child’s age;
- To fulfil the child’s needs and be consistent with his/her desires and inclinations;
- To take account of the individual differences between children;
- To be suited to the children’s varying capabilities and aptitudes;
- To be flexible, diverse and comprehensive;
- To realize balance between the various aspects of development;
- To derive from the environment surrounding the child the content of its topics and activities; and
- To provide the kindergarten teacher with freedom and flexibility to prepare the teaching setting and its various activities, in a manner consistent with the children’s interests and desires. (MoE, 2000/2001)

Because the Integrated Experience Methodology has the required characteristics, it was adopted as an educational programme suitable for the planned reform. The Integrated Experience Methodology is defined as encompassing “everything the child gains inside and outside the kindergarten” through organized settings and free or controlled activities, which allow the child the opportunity to satisfy his/her needs and develop his/her skills unconsciously and positively, while considering the flexibility, diversity, integration, linkage, and realization of balance between the various mental, intellectual, emotional, social, sensory and motion aspects of growth (Al-Ghafoor, 2004).

5.10 Evaluation and Monitoring

In Kuwait, pre-school regulations are national in scope; the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2009) formulates standards for pre-school centres. Evaluating and monitoring pre-school centres is the responsibility of the local education office located in every city of Kuwait. Education supervisor/managers are employed by the MoE to supervise the staff working in both public and private pre-school centres. Regulatory standards are provider focused, with special emphasis on teachers’ performance in the classroom. Moreover, there is a considerable emphasis on the physical facilities, in terms of materials, classrooms and outdoor equipment. Local regulations (building codes, fire codes, etc) are applied only to get licensing permits when new pre-school centres are established. The principal purpose of pre-school supervision enforcement is to provide pedagogical assistance to the teachers during their practice in the classrooms. Thus, the role of supervisor in pre-school settings is to provide a helping hand rather than to identify code violations and enforce the law.

5.11 Teacher Training

The rapid changes we see in the world around us brought about by the forces of globalization and technological and cultural change often make it difficult to gauge what exactly it is our young children need to be learning in schools and how teachers are to be trained in order to prepare our children for the future. Teachers, however, are the motive power in education, so proper selection, training, retraining, and assuring their professional growth should receive high priority. Orientation courses for new teachers, refresher courses for all teachers after five years of services, seminars, extension lectures, permanent tenure, desirable work conditions and their participation in decision making are necessary to ensure their efficiency (MoE, 2012).

Teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree from the teacher training providers, where teachers can major in kindergarten education. There are two institutions in Kuwait to train the teachers: the College of Basic Education (CBE), which offers academic cultural and pedagogical training; and the Faculty of Education, at the University of Kuwait. Both institutions offer a four-year programme (eight semesters) leading to a bachelor's degree.

The Faculty of Education (particularly teach training centre), Kuwait University, and the Basic Teacher Training College, at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, base preparation on a system combining specialized subjects and vocational training. The faculties accept applications that have obtained their Secondary General Certificate or those who have completed the curricula system. Educational programmes and plans in these faculties include three types of curricula: general culture curricula as

required by the university; specialization curricula; and faculty or vocational curricula (UNESCO, 2010/2011).

The College of Basic Education trains female graduate teachers mainly for kindergarten, primary school teachers, and other technical staff. The training programme of the College of Basic Education is divided into three areas:

- Cultural training, comprising 48 credit hours – 38%- it consists of oral communication, writing skills in Arabic and skills in understanding and appreciating the Arab and Islamic culture;
- Academic training, comprising 40 credit hours – 32%- this area comprises the knowledge and skills of pedagogy in the kindergarten stage;
- Vocational training, comprising 38 credits – 30%- this is the major requirement and covers the conceptual knowledge of different educational curriculums.

The Faculty of Education, University of Kuwait, offers three programmes for training kindergarten teachers, one programme for primary school teachers, another for training male and female teachers of intermediate and secondary schools, and two diploma-level programmes: diploma of pedagogical training; and diploma of pedagogical guidance (UNESCO, 2010/11)

5.12 Summary

This chapter discussed the current situation of kindergarten education and its teacher education. The chapter has provided the setting for this research, and focused on notion of ECE in Kuwait through giving its philosophy and an overview of kindergarten education in Kuwait. It was clear that decision makers in MoE in Kuwait endeavour to develop kindergarten curriculum, which acknowledges the need for highly qualified kindergarten teachers. Despite the increasing number of kindergartens in Kuwait, there is inadequate evidence about the kindergarten ITE programmes. In addition, there is a

lack of a current profile of professional preparation of kindergarten teachers in Kuwait, and no evidence of how they are prepared to teach young children in culturally appropriate ways in Kuwait. There is also a paucity of literature in this area. Unlike England, Kuwait has no overarching or separate policy for Early Childhood Education. This area also has not covered extensively in the education policies of Kuwait. Apart from these shortcomings early childhood education and its teacher education are improving.

The following chapter will present the data analysis of England.

CHAPTER SIX: England-Data Analysis

6.1 Introduction

The chapter will adopt a parallel structure of setting of the case-location and the outcome of the empirical research. The English location comprises two historical cities in neighbouring counties. Each has a distinctive historical layout with industries, cathedrals and traditional imports. Both patterns of urban structure are fairly typical of British cities, with an industrial east and a more residential north and west. Both cities have very reputed universities and hospitals.

This chapter presents the analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews with 24 participants (8 teacher educators (TE), 8 student teachers (ST), and 8 practising teachers (ST)). Ten questions (see Chapter 3) were posed to the participants to elicit their opinions about teaching training programmes, their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about learning and teaching in pre-school settings, and how their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes informed their classroom practice. The analysis is arranged in six categories:

- Teacher training (TT);
- Teachers' knowledge and skills (TK);
- Teachers' beliefs (TB);
- Teachers' attitudes (TA);
- Teachers' practices (TP); and
- Early years curriculum (EYC).

6.2 Empirical Outcomes

The chapter analyses the perceptions of the range of stakeholders interviewed in terms of the different aspects mentioned in chapter 2 and chapter 5. The empirical research was designed to cover some important issues, for example, knowledge and skills, beliefs, attitudes and pedagogical teaching practice, in early childhood education in England.

Early Years Education in England is becoming increasingly affiliated with formal school settings. This is not only in view of the Early Years Professional Programme (EYPP) and Early Years Teachers Programmes (EYTP), but also through changes in the early years curriculum. The Foundation Stage includes nursery education along with the reception year to ensure a smooth transition from the pre-school levels through to the primary years. The Foundation Stage consists of:

- 1) pre-school/nursery: 3 and 4 years old; and
- 2) Reception Class: 4 to 6 years old.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learning areas and goals have been reshaped in accordance, where possible, with the baseline for the national curriculum (DfE, 2012). These changes have been preserved in the newest version of EYFS (2014), which directly specifies 17 early learning goals in its seven learning areas. 'How far these goals have been met is assessed in the EYFS profile of each child and the profile is given to the child's Year 1 teacher, to allow activities to be tailored to the child's needs in a formal school environment' (Wall, et al., 2015: 78).

6.3 Interviewees' Perceptions

6.3.1 Teachers' Training

To become an early years teacher a trainee has to complete an early years initial teacher training (ITT) course. This training provides opportunities to gain practical skills and underpinning theoretical knowledge to demonstrate the Teachers' Standards (Early Years). Successful completion of the training leads to the award of early years teacher status (NCTL, 2015). In England, early years teachers must either hold a first degree with QTS and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education awarded by a university or college of higher education.

In 2006, the UK Government released the *Children's Workforce Strategy*, which outlined an approach for approving the skills, knowledge and qualifications of the workforce (DES, 2006b). In the state schools of UK an ECE teachers should have at least a bachelor's degree with early years teacher status (EYTS) by doing Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) and a one year Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) or four-year degree in higher education. In addition, EY teachers also need to pass professional skills tests in numeracy and literacy (The Open University, 2016). .

There are four training routes available, with a School Direct option for graduate entry- all options lead to early years teacher status (EYTS) upon successful completion:

- 1) Graduate Entry- typically a year of full-time study;
- 2) School Direct graduate entry- enables the candidate to train within a group of schools or nurseries with the expectation of employment once s/he achieves early years teacher status;

3) Graduate Employment-Based – a one-year part-time route for graduates working in an early years setting who need further training to demonstrate the Teachers’ Standards (Early Years);

4) Undergraduate- a full-time three or four year route leading to EYTS for those studying for a degree in an early childhood-related subject (Get into Teaching, DfE, 2015a).

Assessment Only- taking place over three months, this is a self-funded route that is ideal for graduates with experience of working with children from birth to age five, who meet the teachers’ Standards (Early Years) with no need for further training, for example an early years teacher from overseas (DfE, 2015a).

Every year, the evidence shows that, all institutions dealing with childhood teacher education make slight changes to improve the courses for the quality and effectiveness of teacher education. The length of practicum has increased and the time spent in the university classroom has consistently decreased.

This section is divided into three sub-sections as follows:

- a) Teachers Training and its Effectiveness;
- b) Teachers Training Curriculum; and
- c) Teaching Practice.

a) Teacher Training Programme and its Effectiveness

When the participants were asked about teacher training programme and its effectiveness; respondents irrespective of whether teacher educators, practising teacher or trainee teachers claimed different opinions.

According to a teacher educator:

'I think we have very good and effective teacher training programme for early years teachers in our institution, and I am pretty sure that across the country it is quite similar. One of the reasons for this effectiveness is that we have variety of programmes to train the students for early years education, for example, we have undergraduate, graduate, and school-based programmes'. TE-1.

Another teacher educator stated:

'During the early years teacher training we have to develop their knowledge, teaching skills, attitude towards professionalism, team work, respect for others and technological skills'. TE-3

One trainee responded that:

'Yes, the early years course helps us to see teaching in a wider and clearer view and getting to schools provide us a clear idea of using theory in real practice'. ST-2

An early years teacher stated:

'This course helped us to see early teaching in a broader view and also help us to apply in nursery classes'. PT-1

In the opinion of an interviewee, England has some excellent teacher training faculties and institutions, which are really excelling in early years teacher education and encouraging trainees for a lifelong process of continued professional development.

The teacher educator commented:

'I think we provide very comprehensive early years teacher training system. I think we produce good quality early years teachers, having necessary knowledge and skills'. TE-3

Here are the comments of another participant:

'We cover every essential subjects to provide the quality early years training'.
TE-8

A trainee teacher said:

'I am interested in teaching, and teacher training is what you are trained for teaching'. ST-5

b) Teacher Training Curriculum

When the participants were asked about the quality of teacher training curriculum, they all asserted that teacher training curriculum is designed appropriately. A teacher educator commented about the early years teachers training curriculum:

'The curriculum we designed has to be able to enable the trainees to teach the early years teaching curriculum. Our programmes are examine very closely by the OfSTED, the inspection agency from the government'. TE-4

Another interviewee explained:

'We have a lot of scope to develop the early years teacher training courses in advance and creative ways...our all programmes revolve around the key standards'. TE-7

An interviewee opined:

'In my opinion, the teacher training programmes for early years are linked to the needs of early years education. But I think there are a few options that could be done better'. PT-2

In the words of another participant:

'Yeah, the training programme in universities provides the professional ability to make professional judgments and decide to deliver it in the best ways'. PT-6

c) Teaching Practice

The majority of participants agreed that teaching practice enhance their confidence. They mentioned that support from mentors and classroom teachers helped to improve their teaching practice.

A teacher trainee stated:

'I enjoy my courses; they enhance my knowledge, skills and confidence. I love to go to nurseries for teaching practice'. ST-7

According to a trainee teacher:

'My school mentor was amazing, I received excellent support and assistance from her and I enjoyed my practice teaching in a great placement'. ST-8

Within the context of pre-service teacher training, the importance of the practicum component for prospective teachers is well documented (Mayer & Austin, 1999).

A trainee teacher commented:

'I love teaching practice more than theoretical part, it is more helpful and it increased my confidence to teach'. ST-6

And a early year teacher shared her experience:

'The early year teacher training provided me with much experience through university courses and teaching practice'. PT-4

During investigation of why teacher trainees chose teaching as their profession, the findings were that the majority of respondents really wanted to be teachers: some were inspired by their teachers, some liked the challenges of early years teaching and a few just wanted to find a job. The majority of participants were satisfied with their courses of teacher training in their institutions and enjoyed their teaching practice in schools.

6.3.2 Teachers' Knowledge and Skills

Pedagogical and content knowledge and skills are essential to allow teachers to adopt new techniques and innovations in the classroom according to the needs of young children. Comprehensive pedagogical content knowledge is necessary to empower teachers to find and create the best teaching techniques to suit students' needs and help them to understand the subject matter. It also helps teachers to adopt new methods of teaching. Eraut (1994) stated that the development of professional knowledge requires a continuing capacity and disposition to learn from experience and to increase one's knowledge. Strong pedagogical content knowledge also enables teachers to adopt and adapt new methods of teaching. The kindergarten curriculum provides teachers with titles of different themes and requires teachers to look for content that fits each theme and implement its objectives. Therefore, teachers need to find their way to different sources of knowledge and have to know how to learn it and then teach it to their students. After knowing what to teach, teachers need to know ways to communicate this content to their students.

According to a teacher educator:

“Teachers can be developed professionally if they take their teaching job seriously, not as the only option they have. If they do that then they will realize the significance of development in knowledge and experience, they will prepare a new generation armed with skills and knowledge, change the community's negative perspective on teaching for the better, increase the number of national teachers in the profession and decrease the unemployment rate among young nationals. TE-3

A teacher revealed that:

'Teachers are responsible for making learning and teaching interesting by showing their interest in the process of teaching'. PT-1

According to another teacher:

'All the knowledge, skills and values I have learned are related to treating every child as an individual, respecting and appreciating him and giving him the feeling of security'. PT-5

A teacher replied to a question about her background knowledge of teaching, that she derived most of the knowledge from her teacher training and then her experience in the school. She said she also attended some lectures about new innovations and discussed with senior and experienced teachers. She also read a variety of books and journals. According to Bulger et al. (2002:2), 'teaching effectiveness depends upon the interaction between the teachers' subject matter knowledge and teaching (pedagogical) ability' (p.2).

According to an interviewee:

'To acquire the content knowledge and knowledge about learners, teachers are not only guides for children's emerging and evolving selves, they are charged with delivering a broad range of subject matter content using various pedagogies and activities'. PT-7

A teacher thought:

'I believe that teachers are always in need of renewing and refreshing their knowledge and pedagogy'. PT-4

Another participant stated:

'My perception is that strong pedagogical knowledge enables us to adopt and adapt new methods of teaching'. PT-2

The majority of teachers believed that teaching is a passion that involves caring, cooperating, and motivating young children to learn. Teacher trainees indicated that

early years teachers/mentors with a sound knowledge (content and pedagogical) base were able to explain their pedagogy very clearly. A student teacher expressed her views:

‘To offer effective quality teaching, early years teachers need an enormous amount of content and pedagogical knowledge along with different learning varieties’. ST-2

A trainee commented:

‘As I experienced, classroom practice reshaped my pedagogical content knowledge and I understood the learning theories better than before’. ST-5

Another trainee said:

‘My mentor always guides me and suggested many things to improve my pedagogical knowledge and practice’. ST-8

According to Carpenter et al. (2001), pedagogical content knowledge is an essential part of teaching and teacher education/training. They said, ‘Teaching can not be considered a profession unless its practitioner have acquired an extensive body of theoretical knowledge that helps them to understand, explain, defend, justify, and where necessary, modify their pedagogy’. (p:11)

6.3.3 Teachers’ Beliefs

Pajares (1992) defined belief as an ‘individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do’ (p.316). It can be argued that teachers’ beliefs can be a strong interpreter of teachers’ behaviour (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs can be classified in terms of personal assumptions about relationships, knowledge and society, professional beliefs about teaching and learning, and beliefs about change and

development (Standen, 2002). ‘Beliefs not only affect how people behave but what they perceive in their environment’ (Yero, 2002: 24). Teachers’ beliefs are directly adopted from their background and their culture (Mansour, 2009). There are five areas of teacher’s beliefs, including: beliefs about learning and learners; beliefs about teaching; beliefs about the subject; beliefs about learning to teach; and beliefs about self and teaching role (Calderhead, cited in Uztosum, 2013).

One interviewee supported Howey’s (1996) description of teaching as a situation in which teachers use professional reasonable judgment in decision making to help produce appropriate instructions. This process involves teachers’ understanding of students’ needs and characteristics, the nature of the instructional task and contextual constraints. The majority of early years teachers had developed their beliefs about teaching from their teacher training, which had lasting influence on their teaching practice. A teacher stated:

‘In a learning atmosphere based on trust and structured freedom children in my classroom are encouraged to learn in attractive approaches’. PT-1

The teaching and learning atmosphere in her classroom is about creating a ‘cooperative learning atmosphere’. She stated:

‘I tried my best to treat the intelligence and capability of children with care and my real experience’. PT-1

Another teacher added:

‘I enjoy my teaching and I really love children. They share their stories with me and do the activities. Yeah I enjoy my job’. PT-2

One participant expressed the belief that during playing games children could exchange information:

'I think when activities involved some information children needed to use and exchange, it made my teaching practice easier and joyful'. PT-4

About cooperative learning atmosphere teachers said that children are invited to develop their learning content with their help. They encourage them to learn in an attractive way that motivates them and approaches them in a way that helps to settle the information in their minds.

Another teacher stated:

'I think the role of early years teacher is to develop a co-operative and creative learning atmosphere in which children are invited to develop their learning content with the help of the teacher'. PT-3

Phipps and Borg (2009) argued that teachers' experiences appear to contribute to the development of core beliefs that tend to have an important influence on teachers' performance. A teacher stated:

'My belief is that teaching is more than conveying knowledge and good attitude toward learning, it also includes, 'modelling creative behaviour' to help promote creativity in each child. I also tried to develop the personal, emotional and social developments of young children'. PT-6

Teachers' personal beliefs and experiences played a significant role in shaping teaching beliefs and practice. In fact, teachers' experience is one of the major sources of teachers' beliefs. Teachers' beliefs strongly affect the materials and activities they choose for the classroom teaching learning process. The beliefs teachers have about teaching content and process and their understanding of the context where they work, are part of their beliefs system (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). Teachers' beliefs play a central role in the process of teacher development.

A teacher commented:

'I believe teaching is more than delivering knowledge to young children. It involves the process of caring'. PT-8

A participant believed that every teacher teaches according to her/his beliefs and those beliefs have a key role in their teaching:

'Teachers are responsible for making learning and teaching interesting by showing their interest in the process of teaching'. ST-6

Teachers need to know their students in order to be able to adapt the activities and resources, to respond to their different needs, learning styles and learning strategies (Brown, 2001):

'I try my best to guide the children through their process and I always teach them through activities and play'. PT-5

According to Senior (2006), teachers tend to trust in the strategies that work well for them and avoid those that have not been successful:

*'Every time I think to create new and real situation for these young people, where they can enjoy their day in the school. We work in the classroom and out of the classroom, and it is really a fun for them, moving, playing, and interact with each other'.*PT-7

Hidalgo (2013: iv) argued that the learning and teaching experiences of teachers are a major source of their knowledge and beliefs, and beliefs that are experientially engrained appear to be more influential than theoretically embraced beliefs. Furthermore, teachers' knowledge, beliefs and teaching practices interact and inform each other continuously in a dynamic process that could usefully be represented as a model of the relationship between three elements.

6.3.4 Teachers' Attitude

Teachers' attitude towards their own professional development is a criterion to determine the professionalism, as their positive attitude may inspire them to do a better job and develop themselves as active human assets (Ahmed, 2008). The majority of my respondents agreed that teaching involves more than conveying knowledge; it requires good and positive attitudes toward teaching and learning. Successful teachers need to be aware of students' understanding by closely watching their activities and their reactions and also encouraging them to ask questions.

Abbott and Hevey (2001) mentioned that early years practitioners undertake one of the most important jobs imaginable, supporting the learning and development of young children; hence the drive of government and authorities to improve the qualifications and status of this workforce.

According to one of my respondents:

'I am educating young children who need to feel happy and secure to be able to accept me in their new world, which is nursery'. PT-3

The majority of respondents agreed that they focus on improving children's sentiment, then on providing them with the skills and experiences that can contribute and reinforce their personalities.

A teacher said:

'Teaching involves caring, cooperating, then educating, giving, culturing, and granting information by enabling early years children to access the curriculum'. PT-5

In one interviewee's perception:

'I think I am successful and can make a difference, although small, in many young lives'. ST-7

In the words of a teacher:

'I have a desire to provide the best learning environment to these young children, that I can'. PT-7

Another teacher opined:

'I always encourage my early years children to use their senses and interests to understand the world around them, especially the world of their school'. PT-3

This teacher spoke of the opportunity to develop reflective practice:

'Sometimes I can feel the effect of my teaching reflected in the children's behaviours and attitudes'. PT-1

According to a teacher educator:

'Teaching is more than conveying knowledge, it requires good attitudes toward teaching and learning'. TE-6

One of the teachers also expressed the same perception:

'I think teaching is more than delivering knowledge to young children. It involves the process of caring for young children and being able to accept their ability and characteristics. During teaching, I tried my best to search for children with superior intelligence (particularly emotional intelligence) and special cognitive skills and those who need special behavioural modification, who need specifically my constant and focused attention'. PT-2

A teacher's characteristics are important because the task of teachers is not just to help children grasp certain content and skills (Aaronsohn, 2003), but also to consider the young children's personality and on-going reflection.

A trainee teacher commented:

'I always loved young children and it was my passion to become a teacher,Yeah, I decided to be an early years teacher and I really enjoy it and it's having fun for me.' PT-8

To improve the confidence and self-esteem of young children, a teacher followed working in teams, groups or in pairs. She said that this type of interaction enhances the social intelligence of the children.

‘My thinking is that a child’s intelligence and capability must be treated with care and promoted with real experience’. ST-5

Early years teachers should do their work in a skilful style, keep abreast of all the current knowledge related to the field of early years education and its policies, continuously work to implant a positive attitude, good knowledge, good behaviour, and positive characteristic in the young children.

6.3.5 Teachers’ Practices

‘The development of a nation depends significantly upon education. The development of education depends on teachers. Essentially, teachers’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, morale, devotion, motivation and commitment play a decisive role in raising the quality of any education system’. (Sun & Jong, 2001: 398)

Professional development for teachers counts when teachers have learned to teach with understanding, which means their way of teaching is ‘driven by their own inquiry’ (Franke et al., 2001: 656). The professional qualifications of teachers appear to be the most vital determinant of the quality of teachers’ classroom practices. Barnett, (2003: 1) argued that ‘Better educated preschool teachers with specialized training are more effective’ and suggested that ‘preschool teachers [need] to have a 4-years college degree and specialized training in order to increase the educational effectiveness and outcome’. Teaching practices are shaped by teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ knowledge (Hidalgo,

2013). Teachers' beliefs influence teaching practice and teaching practice can also lead to change in beliefs (Phipps & Borg, 2009).

In England, early childhood education and care has become a high priority on the agenda of government for the last two decades. New policy and legislation is influencing the organization of service provision. England understands the importance of high-quality ECEC and of pedagogy, and is making efforts to enhance quality in early years provision (Wall et al., 2015). This section is mainly based on actual classroom practice however; it also covered the teaching practice during early years ITE training programmes.

a) Actual classroom teaching practice

In the words of a teacher educator:

'Teaching practice is the basic part of our course as trainees spend two-third of their time in schools. In schools there are mentors, who work with our trainees. These schools play a valuable role'. TE-2

Effective teaching practice is based on pedagogical knowledge, preparation and the ability to be flexible in teaching. According to an interviewee:

'Good teaching and good teachers always require good development and appropriate training. We all need to up-to-date ourselves with knowledge of the most advanced methods and techniques'. TE-5

An interviewee stated:

'I think the best day of an early years teacher is when she helps the children through playing and creativity, and performing various tasks, for example, drawing, painting, singing, playing and acting'. TE-3

Learning experiences during teaching can be rewarding and expand the individual's role as a teacher. A teacher commented:

'During teaching I always grow and learn and it keep me motivated to do the best of my job. I made a commitment to not remaining the same each year'. PT-4

Another participant mentioned:

'I think during the teaching job you have different challenges and different experiences. Each year we have different classes—different children from different backgrounds and behaviours—yes, it is challenging but I must say, it is dynamic and keeps me active'. PT-1

Another commented:

'I learn some strategies from my colleagues and develop and modify those techniques and add some interesting activities according to the situation'. PT-6

This statement has included making improvements to the curriculum of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum and increasing the level of highly qualified staff in Early Years settings (Wall et al., 2015). In 1998, as a consequence of introduction of the National Childcare Strategy, early childhood education and providers have experienced increasing steerage from the government. Like school teachers, early school practitioners now have to struggle with the demands of accountability, attainment targets, a compulsory early years curriculum and standard approaches to their practice (Wood, 2008).

Another teacher said that:

'To maintain the effective teaching practice in the classroom I tried my best to use the appropriate teaching pedagogy which meet the needs of my students'. PT-7

Teachers working with young children need to take a critical look at both theory and practice. This creates a challenge for many early years teachers, who may be undertaking further professional development (Miller, et al., 2005).

An interviewee believed:

'Being professional in teachings means sharing experiences with other colleagues and with children as well as having them interact and be more active in their learning'. TE-6

The majority of participants revealed that they had access to the Internet and different written resources to improve their teaching expertise. Sharing ideas and experiences with other colleagues are another very important factor to enhance teaching practice. Collaboration is essential for changing teacher perspectives about their practices (Makoelle, 2012). The pedagogical approach acknowledges the importance of relationships between staff and children and good interactions.

A teacher said that:

'As I enjoy my work in a very good classroom with good resources and practical support, the children also enjoy this environment of learning and supporting resources. The children always share their experience with me and with their peers'. PT-4

b) Teaching practicum

Almost all student teachers stated that the period of the teaching practice at nursery consolidated their knowledge and understanding and they believed that the content of the programme was very effective. A trainee commented:

'Mostly, the content covers all aspects relevant to early years'. ST-1

The student teachers stated that they got their confidence from the knowledge of the programme and its practical application. They learnt skills from the programme and applied in their practice. According to a trainee:

'I learnt how to make a child more focused to the subject of the lesson through applying interesting and good activities and how to introduce the knowledge to the child in an appropriate time'. ST-5

Another trainee said:

'I think my academic background knowledge was very theoretical and quite different from this pedagogical practice'. ST-7

In nurseries and pre-school centres, experienced early years teachers guide and help the student teachers, and encourage them to discuss issues related to practicum. The majority of student teachers considered that their mentors in nurseries supported their development during their teaching practice. According to a trainee:

'There was a good support from my mentor. She used to evaluate my teaching in a daily basis and provide me with her constructive feedback'. ST-3

A trainee replied, when asked if she would like to adopt her mentor's style of teaching or not,

'Although my mentor guides me a lot and I like her style but I'd prefer to develop my own style'. ST-8

Early years field requires highly the patience of the teacher with children, and her interacting with them is gently. The truth is that teaching is a demanding career and becoming a teacher in a short space of time is not something that happens. The teaching practice is the demand of teaching during the whole practicum experience and into their teaching career.

6.3.6 Early Years Curriculum

A pre-school curriculum is one that delivers educational content through daily activities, tuition and furthers a child's physical, cognitive and social development (UNESCO, 2006). Designing a curriculum for pre-school education, in different countries, creates a dilemma for the ECE professionals and policy-makers because 'Curricula can become "sites of struggle" between ideas about what early childhood education is for, and what

are appropriate content and contexts for learning and development in early childhood’ (Soler & Miller, 2003: 57).

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets standards for the learning development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. All schools and OfSTED-registered early years providers must follow the EYFS, including, pre-schools, childminders, nurseries and school reception classes (www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage). The children are mostly taught through games and play.

A teacher responded:

‘The early years curriculum is based on six learning units. I learnt how to design these learning units and how to prepare the activities according to the aims and objectives of these units’. PT-4

Another teacher stated:

‘All the activities that I design for the children are based on objectives taken from the guidelines of EYFS and I make sure that all the developmental stages are covered’. PT-2

These responses show that the EFYS offers early years teachers guidance, freedom, and flexibility to follow the interest of young children and the teachers can plan the activities according to the needs of children.

6.4 Summary

The nature of teaching as a creative and caring profession points towards the complexity and multidimensionality of teaching, as it involves subject matter and pedagogical knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes. The above statements of the participants reveal the interconnection of their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and practices.

This chapter presented the findings obtained by means of interviews and an examination of relevant primary documents. The chapter has presented the analysis of data from these sources under relevant headings. The following chapter will present the analysis of data and other information derived from feedback in Kuwait.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Kuwait-Data Analysis

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter two things will be discussed, first, the setting of the case-locations and second, an account of the outcomes of the empirical research.

The Kuwait location comprises the main city and capital of Kuwait. Kuwait has a distinctive history based on oil production. The urban structure is fairly typical of Arab cities with a modern style of living. It has a population of 2.38 million in the metropolitan area. The city of Kuwait is located at the heart of the country on the shore of the Arabian Gulf, and contains Kuwait's parliament. Kuwait city is ranked as one among the 25 largest GDP cities in the world along with New York, Tokyo, Moscow and Singapore.

Kuwait is one of the smallest countries in the world in terms of land area. The official language of Kuwait is Arabic but English is widely used as a business language. The majority of Kuwait's citizen population is Muslim with some (app. 256) Christian Kuwaiti citizens living in Kuwait in June 2013 (Kuwait Wikipedia, 2013). Kuwait has one public university, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Department (PAAET) (the College for Basic Education) and 14 private universities. Kuwait University is the country's sole public university. The adult literacy rate in 2008 was 93.9 per cent.

This chapter also, like the one on EYE in England, presents the analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews with 24 participants (8 teacher educators (TE), 8

student teachers (ST), and 8 practising teachers (PT). Ten questions (see Chapter 3) were posed to the participants (translated into Arabic) to elicit their opinions about teacher training programmes, and their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about learning and teaching in pre-school, and how their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes informed their classroom practice. The analysis is organized into six categories:

- Teacher training (TT);
- Teachers' knowledge and skills (TK);
- Teachers' beliefs (TB);
- Teachers' attitudes (TA);
- Teachers' practices (TP); and
- Early years curriculum (EYC).

7.2 Empirical Outcomes

Unfortunately in Kuwait, not enough research work has been done on Early Childhood Education (ECE). The reason is that, in general, in most developing countries, people are not aware of the importance of this significant concept. Even at ministry level, more priority and attention is given to primary education than to ECE.

The question of what knowledge, attitude, behaviours and skills teachers should possess is the subject of much debate in many cultures. Teachers' beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and practices are important for understanding and improving the educational process. These all aspects are related to each other very closely the effect the way that teachers can make strategies to cope with the challenges in their everyday professional life and also help them to shape students' learning environment and influence students' achievements. In addition, a variety of beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices influence

the improvement and effectiveness of early childhood centres and shape the working environment of teachers.

This is understandable, as teachers are entrusted with the transmission to learners of society's beliefs, and attitudes, as well as of information, advice and wisdom, and with facilitating learners' acquisition of the key knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that they will need to be active in society and the economy.

7.3 Interviewees' Perceptions

7.3.1 Teachers' Training

Pre-service training is a basis for all professional development. In this context, the period of training and the content of the programme are significant in professional growth. One of the current international trends in education is the emphasis not only on quantitative expansion but also on the provision of quality education (Global Monitoring Report, 2007). According to the both universities' admission criteria, the prospective candidates should have high marks in secondary school exam. Candidates who are interested in this major programme have to spend four years in the university to qualify as a kindergarten teacher. One teacher responded:

'Kindergarten teachers are always in need of teacher training. To become a kindergarten teacher s/he must have at least bachelor degree in early childhood education and involve in pre-service and in-service training programmes to help them acquire the knowledge and practice of kindergarten teaching and learning process'. PT-6

With regard to teachers' qualifications she believed that,

'Qualified teachers need to gain an understanding of her/his students to serve them better. The teacher should be aware of her/his student's ability and achievement level, prior experiences, maturity and learning style to plan goals and objectives for the year'. PT-6

This section is divided into three sub-sections as follows:

- a) Teacher Training Programme and its Effectiveness;
- b) Teacher training Curriculum;
- c) Teaching Practice.

a) Teacher Training Programme and its Effectiveness

The student teachers were asked to reflect on their teacher programme. When the researcher asked, why they chose this profession, one student teacher replied that,

'I love children and I think if I try my best to develop their personalities, they will become good human beings'. ST-8

Another participant commented:

'I love to interact children, I chose this programme and I am convinced. My knowledge is increasing and my beliefs are changing. However, I need to learn more in order to be a kindergarten teacher'. ST-4

Another explained:

'I want to enter in this profession because my father was a secondary school teacher and he wants me to be like him'. ST-3

Another trainee teacher commented:

'Due to cultural barriers, my parents did not allow me to do another job therefore, I chose this profession'. ST-1

Another student teacher expressed her views that this programme would not just benefit her as teacher in teaching children at kindergarten, but it would help her as a mother in raising and educating her children at home:

'This is the only teaching programme, which benefit me in my daily life and in my children education'. ST-5

The participants were aware of the specialist nature of their professional preparation programme. The trainees believed that their specialised knowledge about children's characteristics, the daily programme in kindergarten, the educational units in kindergarten curriculum and kindergarten teacher's qualification in Kuwait had been introduced at basic level.

It seemed also that these student teachers understood how training to be a kindergarten teacher was different from training to be another kind of teacher. A student teacher stated:

'During this programme, I studied the child's psychology, and how I interact with young children because of their individual differences'. ST-7

Another participant said:

'The teacher training programme improved my knowledge and changed my beliefs about teaching'. ST-4

According to another interviewee:

'I learned to design appropriate educational games for children by using the combination of my handicraft skills and local materials because I believe that children express themselves very well to make things and drawing their images'. PT-6

According to interviewees the predominant method of teaching in the universities was lecturing, and practical and audio-visual methods were rarely used. A trainee teacher commented:

'Our lecturers transmitted their knowledge and information to us by delivering lectures and those lectures are based on the same material from the curriculum books and I think sometimes it is easy for us to understand the nature of the subject taught.' ST-1

The previous belief that pre-service teacher training adequately equipped the teachers for career-life learning, no longer exists; the scenario has changed and to cope with the global changes and to improve the quality of teaching, teachers should be given further training for their continued professional development, like other professionals, throughout their career life.

A few participants expressed this view:

'Teachers need courses to improve their capabilities and focus on developing their competencies'. TE-6

A kindergarten teacher said:

'Training courses are crucial and must continue because they benefit the teachers to teach the young children and manage the classrooms'. PT-7

A few participants replied to the question about their teacher education programme. One teacher responded that,

'The programme is good but it needs more advanced knowledge and techniques. Moreover, the duration of teaching practice should be increased'. PT-3

One interviewee stated:

'I do not think that the quality of early childhood teacher education is very good. It can be judged by the performance of the teachers. What teachers learn during their training is different from what actually is practised in the classroom'. TE-2

The government of Kuwait has launched a few policies about the teacher education but unfortunately there is no comprehensive policy for early childhood education for its teacher education. Almost all participants showed their ignorance about the policies and their implementation. A teacher said:

'Yes I heard about educational policies but I have never accessed them. We just followed what we faced during learning teaching practice'. PT-2

A teacher educator opined that:

'We have good policies and they are also implemented and they work up to early childhood pre service teacher education and on job training courses'. TE-1

Another respondent stated that:

'I think some aspects of our educational policies are very good but it seems some decisions were taken without any prior field work into the positive or negative affects that might result'. TE-7

b) Teacher Training Curriculum

There were different responses of kindergarten teachers and trainee teachers when asked whether the content of the curriculum is appropriate to prepare trainees to work with young children. Some of them thought that it was useful and provided theoretical knowledge related to child development, for example, child psychology. One teacher educator stated:

'The majority of subjects in the university cover all aspects of the growth of a child in terms of cognitive, psychological, emotional and physical facets'. TE-5

According to one teacher:

'Yes, a few aspects of teacher training curriculum are very good, but a few aspects need improvement, and do not prepare sufficiently for the pre- primary stage'. PT-2

A kindergarten teacher commented:

'On my part, the kindergarten teaching curriculum and its modules enhanced my teaching skills and develop my personality and confidence'. PT-6

Another participant expressed her views:

'I learn how to deal with young children and arrange activities for them. I am now able to solve the problems of young children'. PT-4

According to the participants, the modules covered a range of topics, and each of the participants highlighted aspects that were important in their personal learning and teaching experience.

One participant commented:

'I think theoretical knowledge is very important for student teachers to understand the reality of teaching kindergartners'. TE-5

According to a teacher trainee:

'Yes, these subjects benefit us to work with kindergarten children, but a few subjects have irrelevant stuff which we could not utilize during the actual teaching practice. Furthermore, some chapters are overlapping and repeated in knowledge and far from the real world of teaching. I think there is no need to teach them, its waste of time'. ST-7

One participant stated:

'I have learned knowledge about child development theories, which are by ten pioneers in child education. For example, the cognitive theory of Piaget and Vygotsky's The Zone of Proximal Development'. ST-6

A few thought that some subjects are irrelevant to early years teacher education and to the everyday life and learning of young children; for example, history of education. The majority of participants criticized the pre-service training due to its heavy theoretical version of the curriculum. There is an interesting link between theory and practice because it is not easy to apply educational theories in classroom practice. The trainee teachers were concerned about how to translate theoretical knowledge from the training programme onto actual practice in the classroom.

One of the participants criticized that:

'There are a lot of problems in the curriculum of teacher education especially related to the pre-service because the curriculum of the pre-service is much more theoretical rather than practical'. TE-1

Another criticism was as follows:

'The curriculum of the pre-service teacher education just needed to be revised and it should be according to the requirements of the teachers and schools'. TE-8

c) Teaching Practice

The practical part of pre-service training is always viewed as the most powerful influence in pre-service teacher training, especially, through contact and involvement with practising teachers and practical knowledge of teaching (Cope & Stephen, 2001).

A teacher educator said that,

'On my part, practice teaching is a basic part in the programme that the student teachers go through the training institutes for early childhood, because it should help them to apply the principles and techniques they took at the methodology part. It is the most practical part that help them to be teachers in the future'. TE-7

According to Darling-Hammond (2000: 16) specific teacher qualifications including: (a) teacher certification; (b) teacher education, including academic ability, knowledge of subject matter; knowledge about teaching and learning; and (c) teacher experiences, influence the students' achievement. Pre-service programmes worldwide provide student teachers with basic knowledge for teaching and this knowledge has to be kept in mind as a guideline for the field.

One teacher educator stated:

'Yes, we have good pre-service programme on theoretical bases, but this programme does not have sufficient time for teaching practice in the real set up of schools'. TE-4

A teacher commented:

'School experience should be taken over a longer period. 12 weeks are not enough for this current programme. These 12 weeks are divided into two phases: during the first 6 weeks trainees just watch the practising teachers, how they teach and during second phase they practise their teaching'. PT-7

Another teacher recalled:

'My preparation and training were mostly theoretical and did not bear any relationship to kindergarten here'. PT-2

A teacher trainee stated:

'In my opinion the short duration of teaching practice during the teacher training programme is not enough to qualify a kindergarten teacher'. ST-5

Another added:

'We need to practise the activities on young children and learn to develop our skills'. ST-1

According to one respondent:

'The early childhood training was of 12 weeks and it was good but not sufficient to teach young children'. ST-8

She further said that trainee teachers need more courses and training in this field.

The student teachers unanimously answered that they enjoyed teaching practice more than studying theories. One student teacher said:

'I enjoyed the practical part of my modules and believe that this part has a positive effect to prepare me as a kindergarten teacher'. ST-3

According to another respondent:

'I use different teaching and learning approaches e.g. playing with children, telling the stories, do small competitions and some easy mental games'. ST-7

A student teacher stated that she got her confidence from the knowledge of the programme and its practical applications. According to her:

'I learnt, how to make the child more focused to the subject of the lesson through applying interesting and good activities and how to introduce the knowledge to the child in an appropriate time'. ST-2

The research showed that the curriculum of pre-service education is more theoretical and there is less time allotted for practice.

Although the teacher education programme has some flaws, it is producing a big number of female teachers, who are serving in public and private schools.

7.3.2 Teachers' Knowledge and Skills

Borko et al. (1987) stated that successful teaching involves more than following suggestions in a teachers' manual guidebook. It requires a unique classroom experience with children and creative activities present in the curriculum and in-service training that involve observing other experienced teachers and highly qualified teacher educators. They also recommend that attending academic workshops, presenting theory and practice, are also valuable to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers, especially for newly qualified teachers. The Ministry of Education in Kuwait depends heavily on teachers to develop content and create different methods, techniques and strategies to communicate this content to the children. In this way the teacher will have more profound understanding of the curriculum (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1986), and be able to invoke creative activity in teaching within the routines (Berlinger, 1987).

According to a teacher educator:

'The kindergarten teachers gained their knowledge from pre-service teacher education but in-service teacher programmes also help them to develop their skills and knowledge of pedagogy, subject matter and curriculum material. They also observe some experienced teachers during the teacher training workshops'. TE-3

Another teacher educator commented that:

'It is very essential for kindergarten teachers to do their work in a skilful style, keep informed of the current literature and policies related to the field of early childhood education, and improve the positive attitude, good conduct and positive behaviour in the young children'. TE-4

Sawyer (2004) stated that creative teaching requires knowledgeable and expert professional teachers, who are 'granted creative autonomy in their classrooms' (p.12). Therefore, early childhood teachers need to have a broad mastery of pedagogical content knowledge. A teacher educator stated:

'In my opinion, early childhood teachers always need to improve the educational methods and techniques, because technology and research is changing very fast and to cope with these changes we need modern and advanced knowledge'. TE-8

Another participant said:

'Each subject matter differs from the other regarding appropriate means for delivering it to each child'. TE-7

A teacher said that:

'Teachers should have extensive knowledge of the subject matter to create and provide a meaningful learning environment that reflects positively on students' attitudes toward learning and outcomes'. PT-3

In the words of one interviewee:

'During my 6 year career, I gathered enormous knowledge and experience of teaching and using appropriate material during the activities'. She added, *'I wish to receive more in-service trainings to improve my pedagogical content knowledge'.* PT-6

When the researcher asked about pedagogical content knowledge, a teacher educator replied:

'The trainee teachers have general knowledge about it but they lack thorough knowledge of content pedagogy knowledge'. TE-5

According to a teacher trainee:

'I entered the university without any prior knowledge about kindergarten education,...I did not know how important is this field and how important it is to understand the theories and methods to teach the young children. I may have had prejudiced beliefs about pre-school education'. ST-2

It is argued that the EC trainee teachers' content knowledge comes predominantly from taught modules at university through university-based work, while their understanding of teaching children (pedagogical knowledge) comes mainly from the field of teaching practice through kindergarten-based work.

Another trainee teacher commented:

'When I started my course, my knowledge about teaching, pedagogical methods, and teaching instructions was lacking, Now my knowledge has expanded and I feel comfortable to enter into the field of teaching'. ST-4

Another participant stated:

'My content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, both are different from the start of my teaching training programme. I feel now that it was developing from one year to another'. ST-7

According to a teacher trainee:

'I think the best I learned during this programme was about children psychology. I did not know the different stages of child development before. Now I can understand the different behaviour of children: why they are doing this? Or what is behind this? etc'. ST-8

The majority of teachers expressed their views that theoretical knowledge is different from practical knowledge and for teaching practical knowledge has priority over theoretical knowledge.

7.3.3 Teachers' Beliefs

To gain an understanding of the commonness of certain beliefs and practices it is important to examine the relationship of the teachers and their classrooms. According to

Singer (1996), the beliefs and practices of beliefs are different among female and male teachers. Belief is a term used frequently in the literature refers to the nature of teachers' thinking and actions (Pajares, 1992) and best describe the personal and professional knowledge and attitudes of the teachers under investigation.

All the respondents in Kuwait had a firm belief in God and they thought that great satisfaction was to be derived from teaching young children. One of the respondents said that she was teaching kindergartner for the sake of this satisfaction.

A teacher believed that:

'A good kindergarten teacher is one who applies sincere efforts for the development of children, to develop their personalities, introduce them the cultural aspects and treat them very patiently to improve their behaviour problems'. PT-2

Another teacher mentioned that:

'I believe the teaching of Islam and follow the rules and try to apply its doctrines when teaching especially to young children'. PT-5

These beliefs were evident in participants' practise during their interaction with children. They also established a supportive, challenging environment, conducive to learning.

The teachers responded differently, about the teachers' beliefs and practices related to young children's learning. Spidell (1988) stated that teachers hold different beliefs and their actions are related to their beliefs. Their beliefs in relation to educational principles concerning how teachers should teach, how children should learn, and how the early childhood curriculum should be designed were the reason for intervention and direction of children's learning process. A teacher educator commented that,

'The beliefs of trainees and teachers change with time and teaching experience'.

TE-3

A teacher commented that:

'I use practices that support a variety of learning styles and believe that children learn through concrete experiences and different classroom activities'.
PT-4

Another respondent stated:

'I believe that children should learn through interesting activities which make learning remarkable. Especially boys love adventures and it enhances their motivation and love of learning'. PT-7

When I suggested that adventures could be risky, she replied that they should be in safe and comfortable environment.

The majority of interviewees believed that learning through play develop the skills of young children. A teacher replied that:

'I like to be part of children's activities during their play especially, when they want me to be the engine of their train'. PT-5

Another respondent stated:

'I think when children are involved in meaningful activities during play, they learn more when interacting with peers, teachers and different materials'. TE-7

In Kuwait, teachers' beliefs about learning and development in early childhood, rather than their beliefs in psychological theories, were at the heart of their decision to stop the development of physical activities. The majority of teachers preferred structured activities in the classrooms for children's learning processes and physical activities are considered as relaxation.

Beliefs are also the end result of an individual's upbringing, life experiences, and in the case of teachers, the result of socialization processes in the schools they attended as students and worked in as teachers (McLachlan, et al., 2006). Wherever they derive from, it appears that teachers' embedded beliefs are permanent and difficult to change (McLachlan, et al.; 2006; Sumsion, 2003) and are used to evaluate existing and new ideas about pedagogy. Research (Foote, et al. 2004; Vygotsky, 1978) shows that beliefs,

knowledge, and practice are intimately linked. Clark & Peterson (1986), cited in WilcoxHerzog (2002), argued that these factors acting as a 'contextual filter' through which teachers screen their classroom experiences, interpret them, and adapt their subsequent practise. The majority of respondents believed that interaction between themselves and children, and between themselves and other teachers, enhanced the learning environment.

According to a teacher:

'Through my experience as a teacher I've learned the value of co-operating with other teachers, working hard and following the standards of teaching'. PT-8

The knowledge, skills and the values needed for a teacher are based on the feeling that the children in the classroom are the teacher's own. Therefore, when the teachers got these feelings, they will be able to give useful and interesting knowledge and information. In this context, values and beliefs are the most important facto in teaching young children. According to Brantlinger's (1996) teachers' beliefs about education impact on teaching in general and as well as their understanding of how children learn teachers' beliefs about events in the classroom are influenced by their actions; and teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers influence learning outcomes.

7.3.4 Teachers' Attitudes

The attitude of a teacher influences not only how he/she sees the world around him/her but also how situations, circumstances, and the actions of others are interpreted (Fritz, 2008). However, there is limited literature on practising teachers' attitudes towards learning and teaching. Wilkins (2002) stated that practising teachers' attitudes are of particular importance because their attitudes can influence their teaching methods and, in turn, teaching methods can influence student attitudes (Duatepe-Paksu & Ubuz,

2009). On other hand, many research programmes (e.g. Brown et al., 1999; Trujillo & Hadfield, 1999; Bobis & Cusworth, 1994) have been focused on pre-service teachers' attitudes. The majority of pre-service trainees used in this study entered their tertiary studies with a negative attitude, but during and after completing their studies there was improvement in their attitudes, and which were shaped by their educational experiences.

According to a teacher educator:

'The students come here for admission with different attitudes, positive or negative, but with the passage of time they improved their attitude more positively towards early childhood education and its training. Our teaching courses enhance their ideas and thoughts'. TE-6

Another respondent answered that:

'When students get admission in our institutes, they do not have any knowledge about early childhood teacher education, sometimes they have negative perceptions but when time passes their attitude changes and they think positively'. TE-7

A teacher educator replied that:

'We have some courses in our pre-service teacher education for young children which contribute to the formation of our trainees' attitude towards teaching to young children'. TE-4

A teacher stated:

'I did not want to be a teacher, especially a teacher of young children, but an incident changed my life and now I prefer to be a teacher and then I decided to be a kindergarten teacher'. PT-3

According to a practising teacher:

'I have 10 years experience of teaching to young children in this kindergarten and I must say that I developed a positive attitude with experience, and now I am more confident to teach and play with these beautiful children'. PT-1

A teacher mentioned:

'I always announce small awards to encourage the young children to do the activities and it makes the children more enthusiastic about their work'. PT-7

The majority of kindergarten teachers felt that there is lack of opportunity to attend in-service teacher programmes to enhance their attitude towards learning and teaching. A teacher said:

‘We are not provided with an excellent development plan to enhance our teaching quality and advance information of pedagogy to enhance our attitudes towards teaching young children’. PT-8

The development of attitudes is closely linked to an individual’s belief. According to Ajzen (1989), ‘the attitudes are not merely related to beliefs, they are actually a function of beliefs’ (p.274). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the relationship between two. Attitudes may be favourable or unfavourable. For example, if an early years teacher believes that teaching young children is fun, her/his attitude would be more positive, and if s/he believes that teaching to young children is boring or a waste of time, then her/his attitude would be negative as a result of this belief. A negative attitude may affect teachers’ performance in a different way from a positive attitude.

7.3.5 Teaching Practices

In the majority of countries, teachers in the classroom put great emphasis on ensuring that learning should be more structured rather than student-oriented independent activities. Ryan and Grieshaber (2005) expressed the challenges faced by teachers in developing new and advanced practices that reflects the diversity of children. This section presents the impact of teaching practice on the real classroom teaching, therefore, majority of participants were practising teachers in kindergartens.

The Ministry of Education, Kuwait, provides teachers with the philosophy, objectives and titles for themes that need to be covered during the school year. Teachers are not

only guides for children's emerging and developing selves; they are charged with delivering a broad range subject-content, requiring an equally broad mastery of pedagogical knowledge. Each subject matter differs from the other regarding the appropriate means for delivering it to each child. There are some skills and experiences, which need more effort from the teacher to be approachable to children, such as dynamic skills. On the contrary, some other skills and experiences are easy for the teacher to transmit to children, with no need for special educational techniques or significant assisting tools. Therefore, good teaching and good teachers require adequate training and professional development. Therefore, it is the role of the teacher to build on children's informal knowledge and maintain the interest and enjoyment of learning that they bring with them from home (Sarama & Clements, 2008). This section is mainly based on actual classroom practice however; it also covered the teaching practice during early years ITE training programmes.

a) Actual classroom teaching practice

One of my interviewees mentioned:

'Kindergarten teachers should have the understanding of kindergarten objectives and the process of teaching and learning. They should have the knowledge of class management and the some certain needs and demands of boys and girls separately'. TE-3

Practising teachers reflected on their experience about the short duration of teaching practice during their teacher training programme. The teachers stated that there were difficulties at the beginning of their actual teaching but they were confident to apply their knowledge successfully in kindergarten classrooms. One of the teacher interviewed commented:

'I flourished my teaching with everyday practice and experience, the academic theoretical knowledge during pre service training was not enough'. PT-3

Another teacher stated:

'I think that I did not receive good training at the beginning, yet through practice I managed to perform my job'. PT-4

It is a common view in Kuwait that teachers always need to develop their professional abilities. Teachers should know how to adapt new techniques and methods during their teaching process, which will help children to receive information rapidly and accurately. The classroom environment should be like the home environment of the children. Therefore, teachers' qualification matters; proper teacher preparation and qualification help the kindergarten teachers to understand the needs of young children. Qualified kindergarten teachers can understand the objectives of kindergarten education better than unqualified teachers; they can also organize the learning materials and classroom activities effectively.

According to a teacher:

'A qualified and experienced teacher can organize the classroom [in a way] which is more attractive for the young children to stay in the school'. PT-7

For professional development, teachers should communicate and collaborate with each other. A teacher said:

'Teachers should cooperate with each other during process of teaching. Experienced teachers can support the newly qualified teachers and help them when dealing in and out the classroom with young children'. PT-2

In the view of another respondent:

'I implemented the teaching approaches, which I learned during pre-service teaching practice, and these approaches benefited me rather than theoretical approaches. I request to Ministry to increase the duration of teaching practice in the actual set up, rather than teaching theories'. PT-1

b) *Teaching practicum*

It seems that trainee teachers were more confident and their knowledge and understanding were consolidated in teaching practice. A trainee teacher stated about the theory-practice relationship:

'I know how to plan activities, however applying them and using them suitably throughout the daily programme was all via the classroom practice'. ST-1

Another participant commented:

'Practical application has allowed us to acquire the skills of appraising the child appropriately. Each activity has its own method of appraisal, for example in games involving movement we use a 'note card' and observe whether or not the child has mastered the appropriate skills or not'. ST 6

For children to grasp information quickly and easily there is need to use the appropriate methods and techniques. A trainee teacher stated:

'The teacher training programme, especially teaching practise, taught me about the methods of teaching young children. I developed my pedagogical skills and strategies during my teaching practice'. ST-3

According to Klieme et al. (2006), there are three basic aspects of instructional quality in the classroom: a clear and well-structured classroom management; student orientation; and cognitive activation. These dimensions can be elaborated as direct and individualized instructions and higher order thinking tasks along with profound content and demanding activities.

7.3.6 Kindergarten Curriculum

To support the study it was essential to ask a question about the relevance of the early childhood curriculum for young children. The participants claimed that kindergarten

curriculum gave significant attention to all the learning areas (the religious area, the emotional area, the cognitive area, the social area, and the physical area). Trainee teachers stated that they had learnt about all these learning areas in detail through the modules of the programme. According to a participant:

'All learning areas appear in each activity and we can not provide any activity without these areas'. PT- 5

Another teacher claimed:

'To apply these learning areas, teacher should be qualified and familiar with these aspects of learning, especially in the activities provided to children'. PT-3

The pre-school curriculum comprises instruction and play. Children are taught about and through language, literature, arithmetic, natural science, music art, motor skill, role-play and creativity (AL-Hooli, & AL-Shammari, 2008). Al-Sunble et al. (1992, trans.), described the pre-school aims in the Arab world as, 'the provision of an educational environment which secures the balanced and integrated development of young children in all physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects' (pp. 121). Each of the themes used in Kuwaiti kindergartens runs for two weeks at a time. Throughout the school year, the teachers follow Ministry of Education-planned themes. Al-Darwish (2013) suggested that the Ministry of Education should relax its curriculum guidelines so that creative teachers can feel free to do their best teaching.

Al-Darwish (2013) commented on the kindergarten programme and curriculum:

'The kindergarten programme focuses on the areas in general philosophy; philosophy of the Society of Kuwait; and philosophy of the Kindergarten level. These areas illustrate in details the modern trends in pre-school child education, the philosophy at kindergarten level in Kuwait, the criteria for the effectiveness of the objectives, the classification of the objectives and their different levels, the general objectives for kindergarten children who are between 3 and 6, and the characteristics of the development in early childhood which covers in its turn sensor-motor physical development, the cognitive development, and the socio-emotional development. Furthermore, the medium of instruction is Arabic' (p: 45).

When the teachers were asked about the effectiveness of curriculum for young children in the state run nurseries, the majority of them showed dissatisfaction. There were mixed beliefs and answers, positive or negative.

Another participant stated:

'I think at this stage children have a different states of mind; sometimes they want to learn, sometimes they do not want. At this stage we can not force children to do directed and arranged activities. Then learn through play is the best option, under the supervision of the teacher'. PT-4

'I prefer children to learn through play because I think children do not understand the abstract objects and learn by means of direct experiences, therefore, I try my best to design such activities those are suitable to the level of young children'. PT-6

In this context there are few negative answers, another teacher stated:

'The curriculum does not focus on appropriate educational dimension, it simply focuses on social and psychological dimensions'. PT-5

Another interviewee added:

'Our curriculum does not include English language education like private schools'. PT-8

The majority of teachers considered early years teaching as a creative and caring profession, which requires creativity at all times. According to them, child-initiated activities are more useful rather than directed activities. The role of kindergarten teacher is not only teaching but s/he is a facilitator, a mother, and a supporter.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings obtained by the means of interviews in Kuwait and an examination of relevant documents. The main religion in Kuwait is Islam, which encourages knowledge and learning. There is a substantial emphasis on religion and

Kuwaiti culture, where the Islamic religion is the foundation of Kuwaiti culture. Arabic is the official language of Kuwait. Therefore, all Kuwaiti participants had powerful Islamic knowledge and beliefs. These knowledge and beliefs are integral to daily life and related practices influence education, communication and all other aspects of teaching and learning in kindergartens.

The chapter has presented the analysis of data from different sources under relevant headings and demonstrate the interaction between knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of participants, how their knowledge of teaching was structured, and how their knowledge and beliefs developed throughout teacher training programme. Consequently, awareness of these aspects appears to be significant for the development of the education of teachers within the Kuwaiti context.

The study revealed that trainee teachers understood how training to be a kindergarten teacher was different from training to be another kind of teacher. The trainee teachers learned how to interact with young children and managed to design the appropriate activities for these children. The teacher training programme needs more advanced knowledge and techniques to improve the quality of it, although it covers most of the aspects of the growth of a child in terms of cognitive, psychological, emotional and physical features.

It was explained that the kindergarten trainee teachers' and practising teachers' content knowledge comes mostly from taught modules at university through university-based work, while their understanding of pedagogical knowledge comes mainly from the field of teaching practice. The study found that the beliefs of trainees and teachers change with time and teaching experiences. The majority of trainee teachers participating in this

study entered to training programme with a negative attitude, but during and after completing their studies there was improvement in their attitudes.

The chapter also provided an analysis of interviews with participants regarding teaching practice and practicum, in order to understand how the programme content prepared trainees to become kindergarten teachers, and how it was concordant with the kindergarten curriculum in Kuwait.

The findings also indicate that there are a number of constraints, which influence the quality of pre-school education and its teacher training. Some of these constraints include: short duration of teaching practice during pre-service training programme; more emphasis on theoretical aspects rather than practical aspects; and lack of teacher professionalism.

The following chapter will compare the early childhood education and its teacher education and training programmes of both countries, exposed by the data analysis of England and Kuwait.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Comparison

Baistow (2000) has outlined four main reasons for carrying out cross-national research: to learn *about* others, to learn *from* others and *with* them, and also to learn *about ourselves*. (p.12)

8.1 Introduction

The findings of this research, analysed and presented in the previous chapters, have focused on the main components of early years education and teacher education and illustrate interchanges between aspects and experiences. The knowledge of teachers, their beliefs, attitudes and pedagogical practices in the classrooms were all considered separately for England and Kuwait in chapters 6 & 7 respectively and the two systems are compared. In this chapter these competencies will be discussed and compared with a view to relate the phenomenon under study, namely, the role and preparation of early years teachers in Kuwait and England, to the context.

There has been a growing need to compare practice both nationally and internationally, which reflects the increasing interest in the early years field. According to Bereday's (1964) approach the comparison will be undertaken under two headings: juxtaposition and simultaneous comparison. This comparison will be based on a combination of documentary and empirical evidence and there is a suggestion that each of the aspects has some potential to influence early years/kindergarten education. Particularly, pedagogical content knowledge and teachers' beliefs have a great impact on teachers' role in the classrooms and teachers' preparation in early years teacher education. A

variety of pedagogical strategies, knowledge and practices are necessary for success in today's early years classroom (Kleickmann et al., 2013).

The study investigated teaching and learning environments and included four aspects: teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and pedagogical practices. The teaching-learning process in English teacher education institutions took place in an environment with rich provision of resources, which allowed the trainee teachers a healthy and enjoyable long teaching practice in early years centres with good mentor supervision and little intervention. The methods of teaching and learning in Kuwaiti teacher education institutions were found to be different, the formality of the programme making the trainee teachers rely on more theoretical study rather than more practicum. Supervision from mentors is not available in the schools but there is a department called Department of Tarbiat-e-Ilamalya (Department for Teaching Practice), which sends their supervisory staff to supervise the trainee teachers in the placements.

Knowledge is characterized as being non-emotional, rational, empirically based, gradually developed, and well structured (Gess-Newsome, 1999) while beliefs are described as highly subjective and greatly emotional. Beliefs consist of attitudes that are developed by one's experiences (Gess-Newsome, 1999; Richardson, 1996, cited in Kelly-Jackson, 2008). Although there have been several studies related to beliefs, still there is no crystal clear definition of belief and the term has been used interchangeably with a variety of other terms, including knowledge, attitude, values, opinions, action strategies, rules of practice and perspectives (Pajares, 1992).

Although the improvement of pedagogical knowledge and skills depends on the teachers' motivation and many other variables, in practice still, pre-service training is the cornerstone for the profession, present and future. Lynn-Nicks (2005) argued that, 'a good standard of basic education is the first step towards building a strong workforce in any country' (p.323).

This research is focused on the relationship between early years teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and their teaching practices. The study analyses how three features of teacher cognition, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, inform teaching practices. There is a relationship between teacher cognition and teacher practice, which has been described in research using many terms such as: personal knowledge and personal beliefs (Kuzborska, 2011; Borg, 2003).

The research also contributes at the international or cross-national level and reveals that there is still limited evidence about early childhood education in the developing countries, where the religious beliefs, traditions and cultural customs, and personal morals govern all aspects of life.

8.2 The Comparative Method

It is very complicated to compare both countries and all attributes of teachers and trainee teachers. Therefore, the comparison will be undertaken in two stages:

- The four competencies will be analysed not only based on primary data, but also in terms of information derived from secondary sources presented in Chapters, 1, 2, 4 & 5. These four aspects will be discussed in respect of each of the two countries.

- Following the juxtaposition stage, the analyses will move on to *simultaneous comparison* by comparing the teacher training programmes and pre-school curriculum in both countries. The whole process should enable a better understanding of the complexity of the relationships within each location (Ahmed, 2008: 223).

8.3 Juxtaposition

8.3.1 Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT)

Perraton (2001) argues that:

‘In different places we have got economics, social transformation, personal development, religion, technology, ethics, and a shift in the teacher’s role, all among the aims of teacher education’. (p: 2)

Researchers (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987; Wilson et al. 1987; Elbaz, 1983) claimed that professional preparation for trainee teachers is very important and teachers’ professional knowledge has different categories to teach. Ferrini-Mundy, et al. (2007) stated that there are two features of teacher education: ‘the content knowledge of teachers and a well-articulated coherent curriculum’ (p.311). According to Mansour (2008), teacher education and training programmes need to move towards a, “conceptual change” approach, ‘where teachers’ experiences and beliefs are taken as the starting point for introducing new concepts or pedagogies’ (p.1629). In fact, the perceptions and opinions of teachers and trainees are affected by their beliefs and beliefs also influence their behaviour in the classrooms. However, Deford (1985) argues that it is difficult to demonstrate which teachers’ behaviours are influenced by their beliefs.

The knowledge and beliefs of the majority of trainee teachers were influenced by prominent educational theories, for example, Piaget, Froebel, and Vygotsky. The evidence presented in the literature review showed that Western educational systems

have moved away from Piagetian theories and Froebel's concepts in the last three decades and worked towards Vygotskian theory or post-Vygotskian theories (for example, Bruner, 1996) which emphasized the role of culture and social interactions in developing children's knowledge and skills. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky did not limit children's learning and development to age-related stages.

The findings revealed that pre-service teacher educators, in both countries, play an important role in building and developing the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of their trainee teachers. They develop a positive relationship between them and their trainees and this relationship improves the confidence of their students. In this research, the early years teachers indicated that their actions and reactions during the daily demands of their work were determined by the attributes (beliefs, attitudes, and emotions) of their human nature, which they had inherited from their earlier life experiences, and strongly shaped by cultural and social beliefs. In addition, the section also summarise the effectiveness of EYITT and its curriculum.

8.3.1.1 England

In England the educational provision for children under five is offered within a range of diverse settings in both the maintained and private sectors (Brooker et al., 2010: 7). According to Bertram and Pascal (1999), the history of early childhood education in UK 'reveals a system which has emerged as diverse and uncoordinated, expanding rapidly when attempting to meet periods of chronic national need and crisis and waning in other times, and with little cohesive integration of services' (Brooker et al., 2010).

In England the Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for developing the early years education and early years teacher education policies. The Secretary of State sets

and administers the statutory framework for the early years education and teacher training system, establishing the educational policies at national level, working with other central and local government bodies and providing funds for higher education institutes (HEIs) and schools providing the early years education and school-based teacher training. The majority of universities in England have their own Faculties of Education or Institutes of Education and the Early Years Teacher Training department is one of the main departments in the Faculty of Education.

Analysis of the data on classroom and school-related work shows that all trainee teachers interviewed were satisfied with their early years teachers training programme at their institutes. They opined that these programmes adequately prepared them for the real world of teaching. In this context every trainee is required to compile a portfolio and manage workbooks and they were well equipped in this area. To achieve EYTS the trainees must demonstrate proficiency in numeracy, literacy and ICT. Interviewees commented that the early years training programme had improved their competence to undertake the challenges ahead in the early years teaching profession. They also stated that they had received adequate preparation in the different pedagogical aspects of the early years teaching. The trainees considered themselves to have acquired good command of content and pedagogical knowledge.

The participants indicated that there is sufficient opportunity for trainees to reflect on their practices during the time they spent in schools. The English trainee teachers spent most of the course time in schools because the early years teaching programme focuses more on the practical elements and on providing trainees with the professional skills needed for being an early years teacher. The university and school experiences are formally assessed and both university tutors and school mentors help trainees to record

their achievements and set targets. Teacher educators visit the schools frequently and school mentors supervise trainees during the teaching practice. At the end of school experience, the student teachers receive reports from the mentors and grades in the following areas: teaching; planning; differentiation and assessment; learning environment; and professional responsibilities. Moreover, OfSTED inspects the teaching programmes in the universities every three years. OfSTED also awards grades to the universities for their teacher programmes.

Many radical reforms have taken place in English early years teacher training during the last two decades. Schools and universities are both encouraged being flexible and schools are encouraged to be centrally involved in all aspects of training. In fact, English course providers and training schools have a strong partnership. The university tutors and school mentors have regular meetings both in schools and in the university, because to make the course successful, they both have aimed to establish a strong partnership (Cullimore, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Harrison, 1995). The majority of English trainee teachers valued the guidance and advice they received from experienced mentors in the schools.

8.3.1.2 Kuwait

In Kuwait the minimum requirement for study in the pre-service teacher education programmes is the Secondary School Certificate and the ITE programmes require four years to gain a Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education (MoE, 2009) Analysis of data obtained shows that in Kuwait there is a lack of educational policies, particularly policies for early years/kindergarten education and teacher training. There is poor implementation of existing policies due to disorganized implementation strategies. The educational system is centralized in Kuwait and this has an enormous impact on the

development of teacher training programmes. The centralization of administrative activity is marked in terms of funding to the universities and decision-making about curriculum and scholarships. In Kuwait, universities are dependent on governmental funding and must follow on early years curriculum is designed by the Ministry of Education. The curricula are inflexible, with a strict span of time, and this influences the quality of teacher education and training. The study also found that there is a lack of in-service teacher training programmes and professional development of early years teachers.

The study indicates that in Kuwaiti universities inadequate management and lack of supervision and accountability practices are some of the major issues that need to be appropriately addressed in the early years teaching programmes, and these programmes lack the institutionalized arrangements for providing proper training or guidelines to teacher educators in universities. Unlike England, Kuwait is lacking in effective partnership between schools and universities in terms of early years teacher education and training. The majority of trainees felt that there is a lack of connection between the theoretical knowledge they learn in kindergarten teacher training programme and the school-based teaching practice and experiences.

The majority of trainee teachers thought that the early years teacher training programme at their institutes prepared them adequately to plan their work and build their confidence as teachers. They also revealed that they had received adequate preparation in the content and pedagogical aspects. These programmes enhanced their knowledge and experience with regard to the development of children, which they did not know about before. The teaching training programme prepared the student teachers to interact effectively with the children around them. Most of the trainees stated that their course

providers had adequate resources, for example, physical facilities and educational resource materials. They also mentioned that the teaching programme provides educational activities and different programmes that benefit young children. They also mentioned that they understood how a kindergarten teacher could be trained differently from the other kinds of teachers.

However, the analysis shows that beginning teachers are not adequately prepared in the methodological aspects, student-centred teaching, and children with special needs. In this context, the early years teacher training programme neither prepared the teachers theoretically nor provided them with adequate practical experience. According to a practising kindergarten teacher, teaching approaches learned during pre-service teaching practice are more beneficial than theoretical approaches and she suggested the Ministry of Education should increase the duration of teaching practice.

This study also indicates that beginning teachers did not get sufficient opportunity to reflect on their efforts during practice teaching due to its short duration, which is only 12 weeks. This reflects that the teacher training curriculum is more theoretical and places very little emphasis on practice teaching. It shows a significant gap between theories taught in the universities and actual classroom practice. Laursen (2007) portrayed a similar situation in the words of trainee teachers, also claimed that members of the teaching staff at the university did not care about how educational theories are linked to classroom practices. He (2007) similarly argued that, ‘many student teachers experience problems about the relationship between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ in teacher education and find theories irrelevant to the development of teacher competences’ (The Biannual ISATT Conference, 5-9 July 2007).

A teacher training programme in Kuwait is needed which will transform teachers' beliefs and behaviours towards children's cognitive, emotional and physical development.

Summary

Every early years teacher preparation programme has to operate within certain organizational and structural parameters. The study revealed that there are some similarities and some differences in the two countries' early years teaching programmes.

The fact is that the teacher training programmes in both countries are controlled by the Ministry or Department of Education. The difference between the systems of England and Kuwait is that in Kuwait there is no equivalent to England's OfSTED and Department of Education. Moreover, the policy making system in England is more efficient than in Kuwait. The teacher training curriculum is more theoretical in Kuwait than in England.

8.3.2 Teachers' Knowledge & Skills

Lantolf and Thorne (2006) described that knowledge is considered to be constructed through a process of understanding rather than a product of the transmission of information. According to Al-Karanseh (2001), if teacher trainees are to be able to teach their students effectively, they must acquire different forms of knowledge during their professional preparation programmes, including, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of classroom management, and knowledge of learners. Rovegno (1992) asserted that both content knowledge and pedagogical content

knowledge affect early years teachers' practice in the classroom. According to Bennett (1993) trained teachers must attain sufficient subject knowledge in their specialist core subjects to teach and assess young children across the national curriculum. According to Shulman (2004) curriculum knowledge refers to the knowledge of the programmes, materials and resources designed for the teaching of early years learners.

According to Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006):

In order for the teacher to be free to be present learning, it is necessary to have a deep knowledge of the subject matter, children and learning and a repertoire of pedagogical skills (from classroom management to lesson planning to curriculum design and execution of appropriate activities) (p. 279)

Haynes (2000) argued that teachers who work with early years children need an adequate knowledge of subject and an understanding of pedagogical strategies.

8.3.2.1 England

The research revealed that the majority of interviewees admitted that their knowledge prior to their teacher training was not enough to enable them to teach with confidence. According to the participants, if teachers realize the worth of development of knowledge and experiences, they can prepare a new generation prepared with appropriate knowledge and skills. The knowledge, skills and values are related to treating every child as individual, teaching them to respect others and themselves, appreciating their knowledge and skills, and giving them the feeling of security. Although the literature identifies teachers' pedagogical knowledge as a key contributor to effective teaching practice (Riner, 2000; Ryan & Cooper, 2000), it does not disclose how implementation of such knowledge contributes to early years teachers' training programmes (Kilgallon, 2006).

The study revealed that English early years teachers had good command of curriculum knowledge and they drove themselves to pay attention to develop the abilities of young children during classroom practice. They thought their teaching in and out the classroom was reflected in the behaviour and attitude of the children. Different class sections of early years schools have a very powerful image and reflection of their teachers. Teachers develop children's creative and language skills. The teachers stated that teaching to young children was not only transmitting information, but it is also fun, because they teach them through dynamic indoor and outdoor activities. Their pedagogical content knowledge enables them to involve the young learners in learning through play; this kind of knowledge supported them to organize everyday classroom activities. To plan teacher and children initiated activities, with regard to pedagogical content knowledge, play remains one of the most important methods through, which the curriculum is experienced by young children in England. Interviewees had discovered that strong pedagogical knowledge enabled them to adopt and adapt new methods of teaching and allowed them to organize collaborative learning and to manage the classroom activities with different available resources. The teachers stated that they always tried to renew and refresh their general and pedagogical knowledge.

The research indicates that the teachers' and trainees' knowledge contributed to their teaching practice, organizing the classroom activities, selecting the appropriate materials, and arranging the activities according to the interests of young children.

8.3.2.2 Kuwait

The trainee teachers built and developed their content pedagogical knowledge during the years of preparation as early years teachers. This was especially enhanced through teaching practice in an authentic setting situation (in schools). The trainees' content

pedagogical knowledge was influenced by the dominant ideas based on universal (Western) ideas about teaching practice with young people and reflect also the cultural approaches and values within Kuwait.

The study revealed that trainee teachers were aware of their increasing knowledge during the programme and this improvement come gradually year after year. They understood the difference between their knowledge before starting the programme and after moving forward. They had also gained knowledge about planning appropriate activities for children and how to handle their educational and behavioural problems.

The trainee teachers were anticipated to develop and relate three kinds of knowledge: 1) content knowledge (what to teach); 2) pedagogical knowledge (how to teach); and 3) conceptual knowledge (why to teach). The participants understood the importance of pedagogical knowledge in order to begin actual teaching practice. There was a difference of opinion about professional knowledge, due to participants' prior knowledge, beliefs, experiences and cultural values regarding teaching and learning. Almost all participants felt that their knowledge about kindergarten education and its teacher education has progressed and grown, and according to them, this was due to the courses and modules taught during their teacher preparation programmes. They mentioned that they had no prior knowledge about child psychology, but by completing this course they had learned many things about children psychology, which they thought would be very helpful during their future life. They also believed that every year they discovered new knowledge and new experiences during the teacher training programme and during their teaching practice.

It was found that all participants considered they had the knowledge to design educational activities that they understood the content of the curriculum of pre-school education and they were applying their knowledge in reality during their classroom practice. The teachers confirmed that they had 'meta-cognitive' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Moreover, the kindergarten teachers also believed that children learn through play and direct experiences; for example, a visit to the zoo, parks and exhibitions for young children enhance their knowledge and learning ability. The participants also stated that telling stories and singing educational songs (for example, about animals, numbers etc.) is also a very impressive way of teaching to young children.

Summary

The study found that teacher training programmes in both countries enhanced the content pedagogical knowledge of trainees, although there is a difference between the training approaches in the two countries. The early years teachers of both countries believed that every year new experiences enhanced their general and pedagogical knowledge.

8.3.3 Teachers' Beliefs

Beliefs and perceptions are an important influence on pre-service teacher success in teacher education programmes as well as in the workforce, although little is known about those of students entering early years pre-service teacher programmes (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Bandura (1986) believes that behaviour can be more effectively predicted by belief regarding capabilities than other measures of what individuals are actually able to accomplish. According to Richardson (1996), 'Attitudes and beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and

describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions (p.102). Shaffer (2004) stated that beliefs are, 'an integrated system of personalized assumptions about the nature of the subject, the student, learning and teaching' (p.27). Pajares (1992) claims that, 'there is a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices' (p.326).

Bennett et al. (1997) stated that early year teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning came from 'their personal and professional experiences, teacher education courses and personal life philosophies' (p.56). Erkmen (2010) asserted that teachers' beliefs 'come from their prior learning experiences as students, and teacher education courses' (p.29). In fact, teachers' teaching beliefs play a critical role in their everyday teaching practices. The following sections explore where teachers beliefs in both countries came from.

8.3.3.1 England

The research indicates that the participants hold a wide variety of beliefs (personal and professional), bearing in mind that beliefs are evaluations of what should be done, should be the case and is preferable, stated or not, because beliefs in the main must be concluded from what teachers say and do (Pajares, 1992). The main common belief was associated with meeting children's needs enabling them to fulfil their academic potential. The study revealed that the teacher cognition of English early years teachers shaped teachers' practices. This included not only teachers' beliefs, but also teachers' knowledge, attitudes, perspectives and images about teaching learning, curricula, pedagogy, content and themselves. Here teacher cognition refers to 'unobservable cognitive dimensions of teaching---what teachers know, believe, and think' (Borg,

2003: 81). The evidence showed that teachers' teaching beliefs matched their teaching practices. The participants discussed their personal experiences, their learning and teaching experiences, and their social and family backgrounds and their impact on their beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices. Their description is consistent with the claim of Duff and Uchida (1997) that teachers' teaching beliefs are constructed in relation to their all experiences, either learning or working. The majority of participants also believed that creative and cooperative learning encourages children to learn subject content with the help of teachers and peers.

The research also indicated that teachers' personal beliefs and experiences played a significant role in shaping beliefs and practice. Teachers' beliefs strongly affected the materials and activities they chose for the classroom teaching learning process. The participants believed that the teacher's interest, as a guide and facilitator in the teaching process, could make the teaching learning process very interesting. The majority of teachers and trainees admitted that they drew on their own childhood experiences and they tried to design activities that they had liked during their childhood, as they thought that if those activities were beneficial for them, they would be interesting for their students. The study identified that somehow teachers' own beliefs and learning preferences would influence their classroom practices more than required methodology or work material.

According to teacher trainees, their beliefs and practices were also influenced by their mentors in schools and many of them followed their mentors' beliefs and practices. Their mentors told them that all children have their different learning styles and behaviours; therefore, different approaches and methods are required to help children to

understand the learning content. Their teaching was child-centred rather than teacher-centred. The study found strong professional beliefs among all the participants.

8.3.3.2 Kuwait

The study revealed that Kuwaiti trainee teachers tried to adhere to the traditional Muslim culture and values during their teaching and their Islamic beliefs were reflected in the national curriculum of Kuwaiti kindergarten education. Therefore, it can be argued that the purpose of early years education in Kuwaiti society is related to the beliefs of teachers, either Islamic or traditional. In fact, the beliefs of teachers and student teachers were very similar in general, due to their coming from the same culture and same country. The experiences and personal religious beliefs of Kuwaiti teachers and trainees shaped their beliefs and identities, and also affected their practices and teaching orientation in their early years classroom (Mansour, 2008). The study revealed that trainee teachers and working teachers bring their beliefs to the teacher training programmes and early years classrooms. Teachers' beliefs and their practices are influenced by the social and cultural context, as contextual factors form and influence the beliefs of teachers and trainees and these beliefs affect teachers' practices (ibid, 2008). The beliefs of teacher trainees were closely linked with their interest and motivation to become kindergarten teachers and were similar in general. That was because all the participants were from the same city and country. Changes in the beliefs of teachers were reported after experiencing the actual teaching in the classroom.

Summary

During the data analysis, it was found that there were differences between personal beliefs of the teachers and trainees due to different cultures and traditions. Moreover, in

Kuwait, religion has a great impact on teachers' beliefs. However, their professional beliefs were very similar.

8.3.4 Teachers' Attitudes

According to Burns (1997) attitudes are 'evaluated beliefs which predispose the individual to respond a preferential way' (p.456). Rivalland (2007) claimed that beliefs and attitudes are socially and culturally constructed, deeply seated, resistant to change, and central to our way of thinking, doing and being. 'Attitude being a social construct is influenced by many factors like gender social strata, age, stream of education and previous experience of the job' (Bhargava & Pathy, 2014: 27). Attitude is made up of three components: 1) the *affective component*: feelings towards the object; 2) the *behavioural component*: which is the action taken towards the object; and 3) the *cognitive component*: which is the knowledge about an attitude object; hence acts as a yardstick of the individual behaviour (Feldman, 2002). According to Rokeach (1968) behaviour is a function of two attitudes: attitude towards an object and attitude towards a situation.

Teaching, being a dynamic activity requires a favourable attitude and certain specific competencies from its practitioners. A positive attitude helps the teacher to develop a conducive learner-friendly environment in the classroom. Teacher training programmes help in shaping the attitude of trainee teachers toward the teaching profession. Early years/Preparatory teachers bring a multifaceted range of beliefs and attitudes to teaching. The early years teachers' attitudes towards the teaching/learning process focused on, how they interacted with young children. Their beliefs and attitudes affected their teaching and behaviour towards students, and job satisfaction from their work. Devi (2005) stated that success in the teaching field depends upon two main

factors: attitude towards profession; and job satisfaction. The attitude, interest and behaviour of early years teachers help in shaping the personality of the student. There are five factors identified by Bhargava and Pathy (2014), which ‘affected the attitude of the teachers: domestic environment; family background; socio-economic background; beliefs; and educational institutes’ (p: 27). Kilgallon (2006) stated that, ‘maintaining a positive attitude and utilizing intrinsic motivation empowered nearly half of early childhood teachers in this study to become proactive, seek information and engage in acts of collaboration’. The following sub-sections will identify the factors that affected the attitudes of teachers in both countries.

8.3.4.1 England

According to the study, the professional attitude is the feelings of an early years teacher, her behaviour and commitment to the pre-school teaching profession. It was also revealed that the attitude of English student teachers was very clear and positive towards the teaching profession. The practising teachers were enjoying their job and dedicated to pre-school teaching. The majority of participants’ beliefs are consistent with Suja’s (2007) description of attitude towards teaching, interest in teaching, and teaching experience, which have main effect on job commitment of teachers. The trainees showed an interest in developing creative thinking and stated that the teacher training programme had developed their positive attitudes toward the teaching profession.

The study also revealed that teacher attitudes were affected by their own comfort level, pedagogical content knowledge, their personal beliefs about how children learn and their confidence. English early years teachers had overall good attitudes toward teaching based on the classroom activities and social behaviour of young learners. They

recalled their preschool and teacher education memories, which influenced their attitudes toward early years teaching. Almost all teachers and trainees related their memories with enjoyment, motivation and self-efficacy and experiences. They also indicated that to develop their positive attitude toward teaching they always used their skills very positively within the classroom. They believed that teaching is more than delivering knowledge to young children it involves caring for young children and being able to accept their abilities and characteristics.

8.3.4.2 Kuwait

The study revealed that there was a substantial difference in attitudes of trainee teachers toward the teaching profession, before starting the early years teaching programme and after completing the course. The study found that those student teachers, whose parents were teachers had more positive attitude towards teaching profession. The kindergarten teachers generally showed high levels of feeling of competence and self-efficacy about teaching to young children. Almost all teachers and trainees expressed their interest in the teaching profession, especially teaching to kindergarteners and their enjoyment when teaching to young children was evident. These high task values of teachers may have positive effects on children's learning and development. They recognized teaching as having more of a focus on children than on content. The majority of respondents were convinced that kindergartners needed to consider the classroom as a, 'home away from home'. The current study also observed that teachers focused on improving the sentiments and providing children with skills and experiences that could contribute to reinforce their personality. According to them, the intelligence and capabilities of children should be treated with care and real experience. Some interviewees' claims recalled Maxim's (1985) view that teaching is more than conveying knowledge and

good attitudes towards learning, but includes, ‘modelling creative behaviour’, to help to promote creativity in each child.

Summary

The study showed that there are similarities in teachers’ attitude in both countries, in terms of motivation and self-efficacy. The study also found that all participants showed an interest in teaching to young children. They also believed that teaching is more than delivering knowledge to young children. For example, it involves care for the young children and helping to promote creativity in each child.

8.3.5 Teaching Practices/Pedagogy

This section discusses the two aspects of teaching; the teaching practice during early years ITE training programmes; and actual classroom practice.

Practice has been described in the literature as being observed (Smith & Shepard, 1988b). Elliot (2005) argued that reflective practice is an important part of professional preparation, in which student teachers themselves are reflective about their own teaching abilities and children’s learning outcomes. Students without any experience of teaching practice do not connect the teachers’ activities to the reality of the classroom (Leijen, et al. 2013). ‘Unreal optimism’ based on the acquired knowledge is characteristic of a trainee teacher, beginning their teaching practice at school (Pajares, 1992). Carpenter and Blance (2007) believe that teaching practice provides opportunity for developing a three-way partnership between the university, the school and teacher

trainees. This partnership is collaborative, mutually advantageous and shares governance and evaluation of the programme.

The trainee teachers preferred practices that were aimed at mechanical achievement, and gain real world experience within a school culture where they can develop a range of personal and professional attributes. They develop awareness of a workplace culture and the fluidity of the rapidly changing world.

The practicing teachers' choices of teaching practices were aimed at developing the pupils' learning competences and the implementation of competence-based tasks, and have opportunity to develop professionally as they serve as mentors, teacher leaders and co-researchers to cohorts of teacher trainees.

Laursen (2007) stated that, 'many student teachers experience problems about the relationship between 'theory' and 'practice' in teacher education and find 'theories' irrelevant to the development of teacher competencies'. There is a challenging link between theory and practice and that educational theories are not easily applied into classroom practices (Alzaydi, 2010). According to Alzaydi (2010: 64), 'practice needs theory which provides it with principles and guidelines'. One of the main findings of this study was that the teaching practice or trainees' experience had helped trainee teachers to gain a better understanding of the role of a teacher. The study in general evidenced that the implementation of teaching programme by early childhood teachers improved their ability to cope with the demands of their work (Kilgallon, 2006).

8.3.5.1 England

The majority of participants considered the practical aspects of the teacher training programme as the most valuable and informative. Their frequent visits to the early years placements led them to plan their activities in a more successful manner. According to the participants, practical experience was very important in their teaching/learning process because teaching practice provided many opportunities for professional development for trainee teachers. The trainee teachers spent the majority of their time at placements to be across the four years and in the one-year PGCE programme they spent 19 weeks out of 39 weeks at different placements. This practical experience supported them to manage many different aspects, for example, planning lessons suited to the level of young children's knowledge and abilities; learning from more experienced colleagues; and managing to theorise from and within practice. Nevertheless, they also valued the theoretical aspect because theoretical study gave them knowledge of methodology and professionalism in teaching.

In the introduction of the Foundation Stage in England and Wales (QCA, 2013), play was identified as the key way in which children learn. Research demonstrates that the quality of early years education and childcare provision is higher, when practice is led by specially trained early years graduate teachers (DfE, 2015a). Sylva et al. (2003) stated in their EPPE project that there was a positive relationship between having qualified trained early years teachers and the learning outcomes of the children.

8.3.5.2 Kuwait

All participants recognized the importance of kindergarten teaching and its teacher training. The teacher trainees believed that the teachers' training programme enhanced their confidence with regard to teaching. The majority of trainee teachers stated that

they had developed their understanding of pedagogical knowledge and effective teaching strategies during their teaching practice in real classroom situations. However, there was still discontinuity between good teaching practice and the real classroom.

One of the important findings of this study was that trainee teachers thought they needed more visits to kindergartens during their teacher training programme in Kuwait, for the better quality of teaching in kindergartens. Cheng (2005) argued that student teachers should have regular visits to a variety of kindergartens to develop gradually their understanding of the kindergarten context and their role as a teacher.

The study also revealed that during actual teaching, some teachers were unable to interact very well with the young children, due to the short term (three months) of teaching practice during the training programme. This shows that trainees need more time for teaching practice in kindergartens to improve their teaching activities according to the children's knowledge and abilities.

According to the kindergarten teachers, theory is different from actual practice. They stated that, in many respects, they are unable to follow theory. The majority of participants recognized that kindergarten teachers have a distinctive identity, in terms of their qualifications, characteristics, and understanding of young children's emotional, psychological and physical developments. They thought this quality made them distinguished from other primary and secondary school teachers. The study evidenced that more experienced kindergarten teachers had very positive relationships with young children.

The study revealed that early years teachers were critical about the teaching practice during the early years teacher education programme and during their actual practice in

the classroom. According to them, there were some inconsistencies between their teacher training and experience of teaching in kindergartens. In fact the classroom situation was different from the theories they learned during their teacher training. According to the interviewees the teacher-training programme did not cover the actual core of the early years curriculum. The teachers and student teachers supported Pajares' (1992) description of a strong relationship between teachers' beliefs, their content pedagogical knowledge and classroom practice.

Summary

The study found a big difference between the teaching practises in both countries. In England, the length of time for teaching practice during the teacher training programme was enough to prepare the trainees professionally. By contrast, in Kuwait, the length of teaching practice was thought to be insufficient to prepare the teachers. Therefore, Kuwait needs to increase the duration of teaching practice during the early years teachers training programme.

8.3.6 Pre-School Curriculum

The curriculum focuses on the role of guidance in the early years education. The curriculum is designed for those in the process of preparing to teach young children. The pre-school curriculum is designed with a strong focus on each individual child's total development in accordance with her/his modes of learning and creative self-development (Gahwaji, 2006). The pre-school aims include the provision of an educational environment that secures the balanced and integrated development of young children in all intellectual, social, psychological, and physical aspects. The emotional,

moral and language aspects tended to be more emphasized. However, the two main aims explicitly stressed are preparation of younger children for future life in accordance with the challenges of this 21st Century. The next sections will review the early years curriculum in England and Kuwait.

8.3.6.1 England

In England, the Foundation Stage was a distinct phase of education for children aged 3-5 in all forms of pre-school settings. The national policy frameworks were useful for defining a broad entitlement across different settings but they have not been sufficient for ensuring consistently high quality provision. Teachers' personal theories and beliefs remain highly influential on their practice: the processes of resistance, mediation, and adaptation have been central to addressing the tensions between policy, practice, and theory (Wood & Bennett, 2001). The EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) is based on play, but this is 'well planned' and 'purposeful' play with an explicit emphasis on 'school readiness' as children progress through the developmental and learning goals set out in the framework (Rogers, 2015). The finding of the EPPE project (Sylvia et al., 2004) have provoked a re-consideration of the best balance of the curriculum, with support being offered for environments in which, 'potentially instructive play activities' are accompanied by well-designed adult interventions in children's learning (Brooker, et al., 2010).

It was evidenced that the English teachers and student teachers used expressive language during teacher/child conversation. They employed extensive language activities to satisfy the parents' demand for their children to be prepared to read and write the English alphabet. According to the teachers and trainees, teaching involves caring, cooperating, giving, educating, culturing and granting information by enabling

young children to access the curriculum. The trainees also revealed that they learned about the early years curriculum through the content taught at the universities and learn through the practice in the actual classrooms during their teaching practice. Moreover, the study indicated that the curriculum policy is an integral part of structuring quality provision, by providing common guidelines which allow the teachers flexibility and creativity in their interpretation.

8.3.6.2 Kuwait

The majority of kindergarten teachers and trainees indicated that their knowledge and learning about the curriculum of the kindergarten module was very useful for preparing them to teach young children: for example, cognitive development, emotional development, social development, psychological development and mental development. Since Islam governs the way of life in Kuwait, the pre-school curriculum and pedagogy are constructed mainly according to the teachings of Islam. Both the teachers and trainee teachers introduced religious teaching and values to children through short stories of prophets and initial acts of worship.

According to the collected data, the teachers learned about the different stages of development, for example, the physical growth of children and their ability to develop their characteristics. During their teaching service the kindergarten teachers developed their abilities to plan different physical activities for children and provide them with the appropriate educational equipment for the activity. The student teachers stated that they needed to know more about the kindergarten curriculum through the content taught at the universities and through the practices in actual classrooms.

The study indicated that the kindergarten curriculum provides teachers with titles of different themes and requires teachers to look for content that fits each theme and to implement its objectives and using a variety of sources of knowledge. However, the trainee teachers needed more visits to kindergartens during their four years of study to implement the above elements of curriculum practically. In fact, the trainee teachers' learning should be based on the authentic setting and problems that they encounter in the classroom (Moswela, 2006). Therefore, Kuwaiti trainees demanded that the early years teaching programme should include more time for the practical element enable them to understand the main aspects of pre-school curriculum.

Summary

The finding reveals that the early years curriculum in both countries is more or less the same, for example, cognitive, emotional, physical, mental, social, and psychological developments. However, the curriculum and pedagogy in Kuwait are constructed according to the teaching of Islam.

8.4 Simultaneous Comparison

In the simultaneous comparison, both countries and case locations will be incorporated in an integrated discussion within each of the six categories.

8.4.1 Similarities and Differences

It was found in both countries that teachers' beliefs have a leading role in early years teachers' teaching, since the participants stated they only used the knowledge in which they believed.

The participants of both countries had common thinking about the attitudes of preschool teachers. They characterized a teacher as healthy, psychologically and emotionally, patient, tolerant, and with an understanding of young children. The participants in both contexts believed that preschool teachers and trainees should have good interpersonal skills and make an effort to get along with their colleagues and the parents of the children.

The study of both countries revealed that the preschool teachers create attractive, well-organized learning environments those are rich in materials at a variety of development levels and develop many tests. In this respect the study found differences between the pedagogical practice of teachers in England and Kuwait. The study found that English early years teachers had more experience in arranging their teaching activities according to the children's knowledge and abilities. This is due to spending more time in preschool placements during their teacher training programme. On the other hand, due to lack of frequent visits to kindergarten during their teacher training programme, the Kuwaiti teachers had less experience and practice to plan activities effectively.

One aim of this study was to establish how the student teachers' knowledge, beliefs and teaching practice developed during the period of their professional preparation (Bennett,

1993). The common factor between the systems of England and Kuwait is that the governments or state run organisations control both and the level of organisation is hierarchal. The difference is that the system is more centralized in Kuwait and more diversified in England. Secondly, unlike England, Kuwait does not have any organisation like OfSTED for accountability of teacher training programmes. Moreover, there is a plethora of teacher training departments in England but Kuwait has only two universities, to train early years teachers. The duration of teaching practice during the teaching programme is insufficient in Kuwait as compared to England, where students spend more than half their time at placements and teachers are prepared more professionally.

The study concluded that the early years/kindergarten teaching programmes in England and Kuwait prepared the student teachers to teach the pre-school curriculum in two ways: a) university-based teaching programmes, and b) early childhood teaching programmes. In England, the trainees spent the majority of their time at the placements (early years centres) and less time in the university. On the contrary, in Kuwait, the trainees spent the majority of their time at the university and less at kindergarten.

8.5 Elucidating the Objectives

At the end of the simultaneous comparison and in respect of its outcome, it would appear that the research objectives have been met. In this context, I derived both primary evidence and secondary evidence from documentary and empirical sources, and from the literature review and contextual literature, and cross-national comparative analysis (Ahmed, 2008). On this basis it is concluded that:

- 1) All the investigated competencies are very essential elements of both English and Kuwaiti teachers' role and performance. The study revealed that there are very strong connections between knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and their impact on teaching practice, as the main characteristics of early years teacher programmes and classroom practice in pre-school centres. The study also indicated that these four aspects revolved around the teacher training programme and pre-school curriculum.
- 2) The study showed the similarities and differences between the cultural, historical, political contexts and geographical locations. Despite the differences in culture and historical situations, the teacher training programmes, the preparation and practice of teachers have similarities in terms of knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes.
- 3) This comparative study revealed that cross-national research contributed some valuable contributions to teachers' preparation and practice.

8.6 Summary

The findings of the current study indicate that the respondents believed that teaching builds upon a love for the profession and a love to be of service to children. All participants believed that early years teaching is a passion that involves caring, cooperating, and motivating children to learn. It was also observed that trainee teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes in both countries were influenced by their own social, cultural and historical contexts. This supported the idea of Hargreaves (1994) that, 'Local cultures give meaning, support and identity to teachers and their work' (p.165). Finally, the study revealed that the teacher education and training programmes in England and Kuwait have the same universal ideas and theories about early years

education, which seemed to be reflected in practice. However, the Kuwaiti teachers tried to adhere to the Islamic and traditional culture during their teaching practice.

A discussion of these conclusions and their significance is now presented in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER NINE: Conclusion

Hughes (1980) quoted Froebel as stating:

Nurseries should not try to teach children things they are not interested in or ready for but should be places where children are as free as possible to play, explore, discover, and above all be happy. (p.210)

9.1 Introduction

This research has explored various factors that are believed to influence the perceptions of early years teacher trainees and existing teachers. The study also sought to examine the experiences and views of a selected sample of early years student teachers and teachers. The participants were asked to describe how content pedagogical knowledge, beliefs and attitudes influenced their role as student teachers and practising teachers in early years education systems. The study aimed to address an identified research gap and to contribute to the research on early years teaching in Kuwait. The collected data also provided evidence that the socio-cultural background in both countries could be used as a context for understanding the four dimensions of teachers and trainees. In this context, Olson (1988), stated that, ‘what teachers tell us about their practice is, most fundamentally, a reflection of their culture and can not be properly understood without reference to the culture’ (p. 69). The present case studies have been developed with the aim of increasing our understanding of how teachers’ pedagogical practices are informed by their knowledge and beliefs about teaching in early years classrooms in Kuwait and England.

The findings of this study were presented in three parts. The first part was based on the documentary analysis of educational policies, international and national research

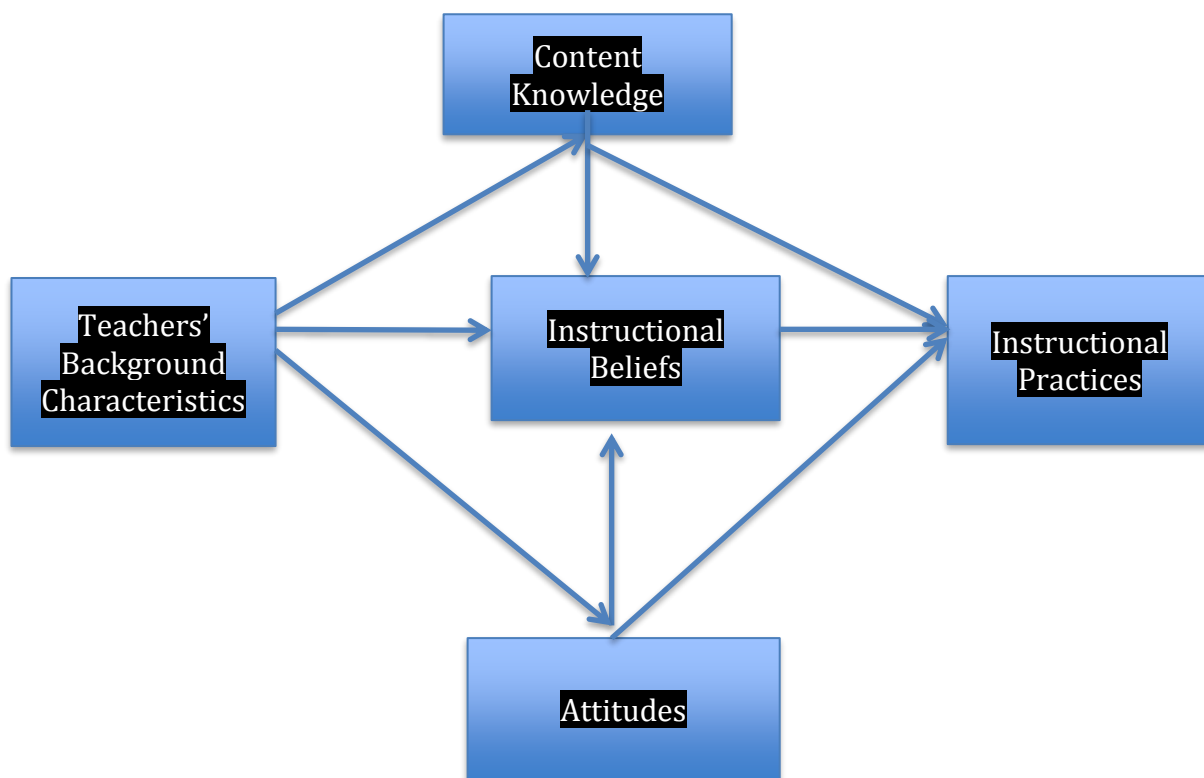
review. The second part detailed the findings of the semi-structured interviews conducted in England and Kuwait. The third part presented qualitative data pertaining to the study in both countries and then simultaneous comparison of early years teacher education and the four competencies.

Early years or kindergarten education is not developed just by theory and practice. There are many factors affecting teachers' role and attitude in the classroom. Among those selected for discussion in this study were teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and pedagogical practice. In other words, the study involved the examination of the interplay between teachers' practices and three dimensions of their career development. The study also explored how teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes feed each other through teaching practices and daily teaching activities. The study also showed evidence that the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of early childhood teachers were influenced by their own cultural, social and religious contexts of development. Although the majority of educational theories come from Western cultures, the Kuwaiti teachers and trainee teachers were transmitting the Islamic and Arab society's values and beliefs to children during their teaching and teaching practice.

Wilkins (2008) put forward Earnest's theoretical model relating teacher knowledge, attitude, and beliefs to instructional practices, which shows that teachers' knowledge, attitude and beliefs are influenced by their background characteristics. Moreover, according to Wilkins (2008) background characteristics involve teachers' experience, education, training and environment.

Ernest (1989) argued that teachers' knowledge represents the cognitive component and teachers' attitudes and beliefs represent affective components.

Figure 9.1: Ernest's theoretical model relating teachers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and instructional practice.



Source: Wilkins (2008)

Several studies have adopted the model drawn by Ernest. Including this study, all studies considered that there are connections between teachers' knowledge, attitude and beliefs towards their behaviour, portraying in their instructional knowledge. Ernest (1989) argued that 'beliefs' consist of the teacher's system of beliefs, conceptions, values and ideology. Beliefs develop over time on the basis of related experiences, while the affective dimension of them influences the role and the meaning of each belief in the belief system (Wilkins, 2008).

9.2 The Relationship between Knowledge, Beliefs, Attitudes and Practice

According to Borg (2003) teachers' knowledge and teachers' beliefs are considered two separate issues when explaining more clearly, but they are interlinked about subject matter. Mansour (2008) draws the conclusion with regard to the relationship between knowledge and beliefs that 'beliefs controlled the gaining of knowledge and knowledge influenced beliefs ' (p.1626). Woods (1996) asserted that teachers' knowledge and teachers' beliefs seem to be part of a continuum where they overlap and are difficult to differentiate. The educational beliefs of teachers and trainees play a very important role in the gaining of knowledge and the interpretation of teaching behaviour (Thomas, et al., 2001). Senior (2006) argued that teaching experience is not only a source of knowledge but it is also a central source of teachers' beliefs. According to Shulman (1987) teachers' beliefs come from four sources: accumulated content knowledge; educational materials and structures, formal teacher education and the 'wisdom of practice' that is from practical experiences.

Pajares (1992) stated that there is 'a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices' (p. 326). In fact, teachers' beliefs, knowledge and practice are interlinked and may impact on teaching quality and teacher effectiveness, however, identifying where knowledge ended and beliefs start is highly problematic (Pajares, 1992). Abdelhafez (2010) stated that, 'continuous training helps teachers update their knowledge and cope with the demands of teaching' and here 'teacher knowledge develops with teaching experiences' (279). Consistent with these views, knowledge, beliefs, and practices were found to be linked in the current study; it was shown that practice was influenced by thinking and included a cognitive element (Smith & Shepard, 1988b).

Therefore, the current research illustrates the interactive relationship between teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices. The current study also revealed that the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of early years teachers and trainee teachers cannot be separated from each other.

9.3 Similarities and Differences

The research illustrates the gap that appears to exist between knowledge generated by researchers and the knowledge managed by early years teachers. The researchers develop knowledge and theories but teachers, on the other hand, may lack of awareness of the relevance of those theories to teaching as well as lack of explicit knowledge of the corresponding approaches and their relevance to their teaching practices (Hidalgo, 2013).

Different countries have different educational systems and have their own goals, particular aims and objectives. In much of its content, early years education and teacher training in England and Kuwait have similar philosophies on early years but differences in practices. The English and Kuwaiti frameworks for early years' teacher training courses differ in the key areas of educational and professional studies, subject studies and teaching practice in the early childhood centres. The theoretical setup has many similarities but there are structural difference in curricula, and in the culture of early childhood teacher training programmes in England and Kuwait. In England the curriculum consists of two guideline documents, standards and requirements for ITE, and more emphasis on practical aspects of curriculum. ITE providers are free to develop their own curriculum and focus on the most essential and important topics. On the other hand, in Kuwait the curriculum is more theoretical and very little emphasis on practice

teaching. ITE providers are forced to teach the prescribed textbooks and written materials, which is recognised as ‘the curriculum’.

The fact is that the both countries launched the educational policies but unlike England, Kuwait does not have separate education policy for early childhood education and teacher training. Secondly, there is a gap between the educational policies and their implementation in Kuwait. The study found that there is plethora of routes for early childhoods’ teacher training in England but in Kuwait there are one or two routes to enter into teaching.

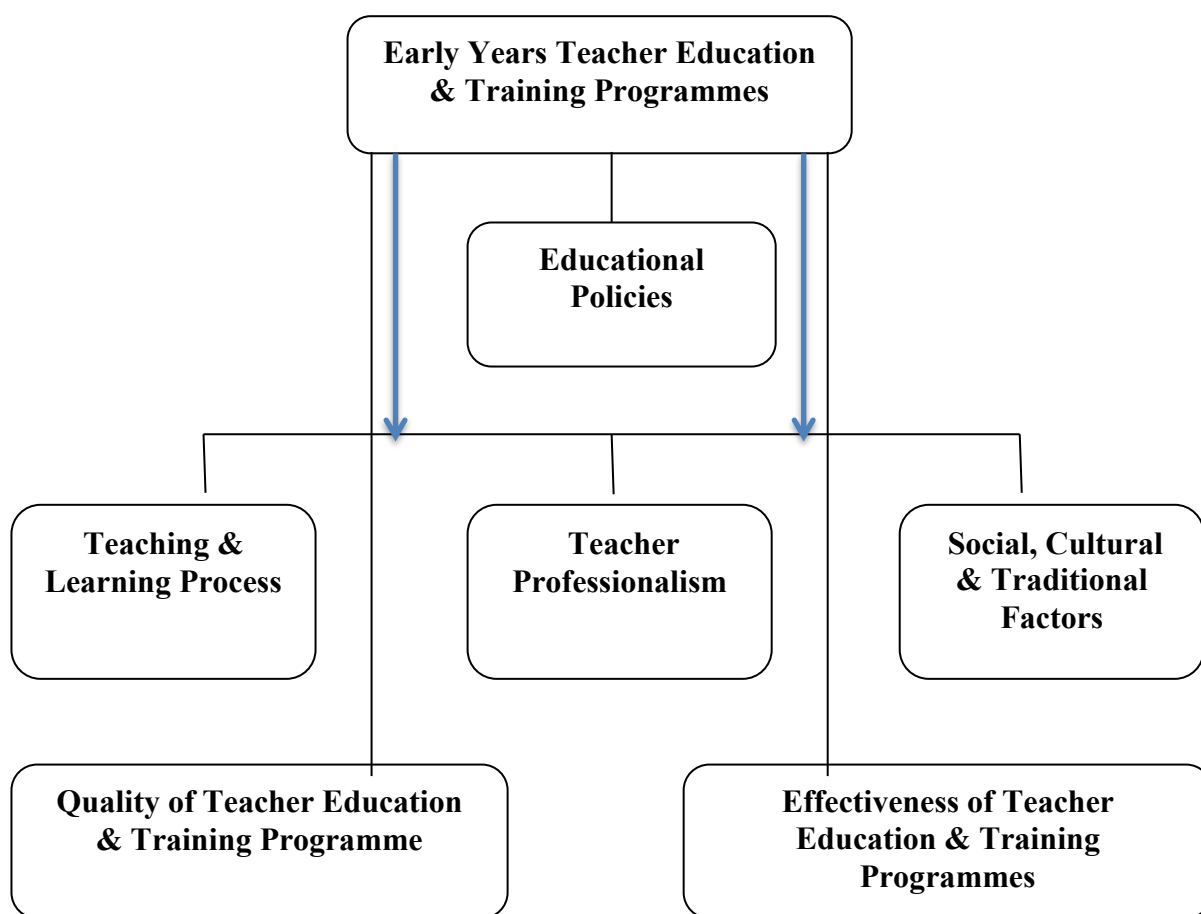
The study illustrates that teaching practices are not only supported by teachers’ knowledge but they are also enlightened by teachers’ beliefs in both countries. Moreover, the teacher trainees are given opportunities to reflect on their own actions, express their points of view, and share their ideas among themselves as well as with mentors.

The finding also reveals that the early childhood curriculum in both countries is more or less the same, for example, cognitive, emotional, physical, mental, social, and psychological developments. However, the curriculum and pedagogy in Kuwait, being a Muslim country, are constructed according to the teaching of Islam.

9.4 Emergent Issues

There are some other key factors that affect the early years teaching programmes, teachers’ preparation, and teachers’ performance, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 9.2: Different Emergent Issues



Suad, 2016

All these factors can be seen both from the literature and from the case-location fieldwork to affect early years teacher training programmes.

9.4.1 Educational Policies

The study revealed that the educational policies in England are very well planned and formulated. The philosophy of early childhood education policy is very clear. Every year the government launches a new policy with some changes and improvements. Therefore, there is no gap, however small, between the planning and implementation of

the policies. Therefore, these rapid changes improve the quality of early years education in England.

On the other hand, in spite of increasing number of children in the kindergartens in Kuwait, there is no separate education policy for pre-school education. A review of educational policies in Kuwait revealed that there are few policies, which refer to early years education and its teacher training and these policies have focused on restructuring the system without a distinctive vision and philosophy (Ahmed, 2008). The documentary evidences showed the lack of a clear philosophy concerning the concept of the early years teacher programme and its effectiveness. To improve the quality of early years education and its teacher education in Kuwait, there is a need to formulate separate policies and ensure teachers know them.

9.4.2 Quality of Early Years Teacher Education

The concern with improving quality is shared across international boundaries (Gahwaji, 2006). Research demonstrates that the quality of early education and childcare provision is higher when specially trained early years graduate teachers lead practice. This makes it vital that high-calibre candidates train as early years teachers (DfE, 2015a). ‘Different nations have adopted different preferred paths of educational development and they have their own goals, specific aims and objectives’ (Ahmed, 2008: 257). Therefore, there are structural differences between the teacher training programmes of England and Kuwait, in terms of curricula, teaching practice, and cultural aspects. The research indicated that due to strong partnership between universities and training schools, the learning environment offered in university-based and school-based programmes is more positive than in the Kuwaiti context. I agree with Ahmed (2008) that in England, ‘the

schools are encouraged to be centrally involved in all aspects of training and both schools and universities are encouraged to be flexible' (p.258).

In Kuwait, the teacher training programme is not very structured. Lack of advanced curricula and short duration of time for teaching practice are responsible for shaping the poor quality of kindergarten teacher education programmes. There appears to be growing agreement on its important dimensions (teaching practice, teachers' beliefs, teachers' curriculum) even though most early years teacher training providers in Kuwait do not yet achieve the recommended standards in Western countries. To improve the quality of teacher education in the country requires an improvement in the curriculum, an increase in the duration of teaching practice, appropriate utilization of government funds, and positive steps towards fair accountability.

9.4.3 Effectiveness of the Early Years Teacher Training Programmes

The literature review raised critical issues regarding the importance of having a relevant and effective early years teaching programme. The effectiveness and impact of a teacher training programme must depend on the relationship of the quality of the training programmes and the calibre of each trainee teacher (Challen et.al, 2005). In this context, Zuoyu (2002) asserted that, 'No research data show the graduates from teacher education programmes are over the longer term stronger in teaching than those who graduate from other programmes' (p.214).

In England, early years teacher training programmes have been considered successful but surprisingly, no single organization is responsible for publishing and collating such data in order that policy decisions can be informed and cost effectiveness evaluated

(McNamara, et al., 2008). It is still difficult to discuss the effectiveness of different points such as content of course and instructional methods best suited for particular aspects of teacher preparation; the relative contributions of centre-based learning; assignments and teaching experience to trainees' progress; the importance of their particular school experience contexts on the outcome of their practice; and the importance of consistency between school and centre-based training (McNamara, et al., 2008, cited in Ahmed, 2008).

In Kuwait, the teacher training providers are producing a good quantity of kindergarten teachers every year, who are working in the state-run and privately owned kindergartens. However, the study found some disjunctures between kindergarten teachers' professional preparation and the demands of teaching, as well as an absence of strong academic support to trainees and lack of educational policies, especially for pre-school teacher education. In this situation kindergarten teachers and trainees have little opportunity to develop skills that can make them more professional and successful in their teaching practice and help them to be more confident and motivated. The study observed a few gaps and inadequacies during the professional preparation of kindergarten teachers at teacher training providers, in terms of curriculum and teaching practice. The Ministry of Education has not managed to provide any system of accountability to check the quality of education.

9.4.4 Teacher Professionalism

It is obvious that teaching as a profession has the responsibility to enter the realm of national interest as valuable human capital, affecting not only the school organization, but the whole educational system. The teaching-learning process, which is based on teachers, pupils and curriculum, cannot achieve its objectives without qualified

professional and effective teachers. In turn, teachers' qualification in terms of holding a teaching certificate has never been regarded as the only criterion for successful learning; teachers' professionalism is affected by personal motivation and job satisfaction, collaboration with the school professional staff and administration, the reward system and local authority and community support.

Definitions within professional development also reflect a progressive conceptualisation of this field. Hoyle (1995) defines the professional development as the 'continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills, which enhance professional practice' (p.64). This definition recognises the importance of continuity in teachers' professional development, and calls for a balance between theoretical and practical knowledge. Day (1999:6) conceptualises professional development with 'a sense of commitment not only for the personal interest and development, but a commitment towards the organisation, society and other individuals as well'.

Over the last three decades teacher professionalism has received ever-increasing attention by scholars in England. As a result of this attention, 'many forms and characteristics of teacher professionalism have been generated. Professional development is a continuous process of individual and collective examination and improvement of practice' (Ahmed, 2008:261). The study identified that teacher professionalism is affected by teachers' beliefs, attitudes, motivation and job satisfaction.

The study reveals that in Kuwait, the teacher training programme and institutions, the teacher educators, early childhood teachers, and trainee teachers need a continuous

professional programme. There is a need to arrange workshops, seminars and conferences to enhance the professional development of all the stakeholders.

9.4.5 Teaching and Learning Process

Considerable time was devoted to field study and collecting first hand data through visits to early years schools in both countries. This produced a wealth of information about the teaching-learning process in English and Kuwaiti schools. The study indicated that in English schools there was a wide range of opportunities to enable the children to learn at the same time, to satisfy their need to move, to interact and to explore, because the aims of education at an early stage in England are based on children's ability to learn. It was also found that play was structured to allow skills to develop in curriculum areas and there was no conflict between the aims of early years education and the practice of teaching and learning. The facilities of the classroom and the freedom of choice encouraged the children to learn, to gain physically by moving and socially by interacting with each other and learning some social rules, which improved their social and cognitive skills. The positive role of teacher facilitated the classroom environment to enhance learning.

The study revealed that in Kuwait, teaching and learning also took place in a mixed environment of formal and informal instructions. The teachers stated that they followed the guidelines of the curriculum, but as the method of teaching and learning did not allow freedom of movement, interaction and exploration, it did not meet children's needs. Most of the time, the learning process was developed through instructional methods which gave the children no opportunity to make direct contact with each other to express their feelings freely and exchange information, because they had to

concentrate on the teacher. Both children and their activities were directed and controlled by the teacher. However, during playtime children were able to choose their activities such as play with different materials, drawing, handicraft or physical activities, which enabled them to interact with each other and to practise their social and cognitive skills.

9.4.6 Social, Cultural, and Traditional Factors

The study revealed a very important factor, that the socio-cultural milieus and social and traditional interaction are very important factors in building the understanding of knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. Culture includes revealing the socially constructed framework, facts, norms, and experiences. Tradition, culture, and social aspects seem to influence the nature of these three dimensions and classroom teaching practice.

Culture influences all aspects of life including education and its dimensions. Education is considered a key element in the transmission of culture. Thomas (2000) stated that teachers and the education they receive are at the heart of the process of cultural transmission. This study indicated that cultural milieu played an important role in the learning/teaching process of early years teachers and trainees.

In England the research indicated two types of culture: the national culture; and institutional culture. However, the cultural distinctiveness of Kuwaiti teachers' and trainees' is their Islamic beliefs, which is imposed on their early years teaching practice. The Kuwaiti kindergarten school curriculum aims to ensure that the classroom activities the young children are involved in are related to their culture and families.

9.5 Further Research

Further research would be useful if it probed other specific areas of early childhood education and its training allied to this current study in both countries. However, there are some cases where early years teachers did not understand the concrete reasons behind the necessity of teaching practices and the impact of their pedagogical knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. The study also found some inconsistency between some teachers' practices and their established beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, in order to clarify the nature of these different beliefs and attitudes, there is a need for further research about how particular types of beliefs and attitudes informed teaching practices. Moreover, such research would help to develop early years ITE programmes and teaching practice, and may result in more positive outcomes with regard to children's learning and development.

9.6 Limitations of the Study

As the word 'limitation' suggests, this section of the research identifies the restrictions and constraints that came in the way of conducting this research. The difficulties of learning from another country, due to the different language and cultural differences, are acknowledged. Attempts to transfer any experience or information must take account of each country's specific character (Alexander, 1997). In this study I was aware of differences between teacher education systems in England and Kuwait. Therefore, I was very watchful of each system's problems in particular, especially as related to their historical background.

Moreover, concerns about confidentiality affected interviews; participants tended to be reluctant to discuss matters concerning government policies openly and candidly. Class teachers also did not share their professional experiences.

9.7 Concluding Remarks

The study revealed that gaining the views of different stakeholders were a significant problem and it was very difficult to know how to consider the best view to inform the quality debate. However, the more professional views have been accommodated in the evaluation tool.

The study found that it is teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, which reflect their training, background, and personalities that determine their performance in the classroom. The current research has been conducted through rich illustrative data from both countries that allowed me to perceive the similarities and differences between their frameworks to determine the applicability of the results to their contexts. The present research could also contribute to the general understanding of the teaching practice, and may result in more positive outcomes with regard to young children's learning and development. One of the outcomes of this study is an increase in my own understanding of early childhood teaching processes in terms of increasing knowledge, and determined beliefs. My professional and personal experiences have been developed during this study. I developed my learning as an early years teacher educator and a researcher while conducting this research. I also have acknowledged how my beliefs and attitudes enlighten my teaching practices, supported by my knowledge.

The research also addressed the third main research question and its objective. This was shown in the two case locations, which proved to be comparable, and revealed the broad educational attributes and values of their respective countries. Both cases also revealed distinctive differences based on their particular educational histories, educational culture and current circumstances. Since cross-national case studies research is rare, Bereday's (1964) comparative methodology, adopted here, has the potential to contribute to theory in this field.

This study was based on empirical research in the field of early childhood education and its teacher training. This type of research may have an influence on policy makers in Kuwait to enable teacher educators to consider what effective models of ITE are. Kuwaiti policy makers need to create policies that support and encourage teacher educators to perform their role.

Finally, the research has provided satisfaction for me in addressing the research questions as while remaining clear about my conceptual framework and it has generated an outcome of some worth to the area of comparative educational study within which it is located.

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Appendix 1: Ethical Approval



Shaped by the past, creating the future

23 March 2015

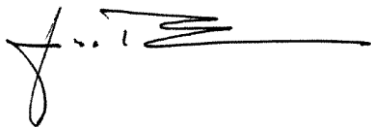
Suad Noor
PGR student

Suad.noor@durham.ac.uk

Dear Suad

I am pleased to inform you that your application for ethical approval in respect of 'A comparative study about early childhood teachers' role and preparation in England and Kuwait' has been approved by the School of Education Ethics Committee.

May we take this opportunity to wish you good luck with your research

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Beckmann".

Dr. J. Beckmann
Chair of School of Education Ethics Committee

Appendix 2: Participation Information Sheet for Semi-Structured Interviews

Participant Information Sheet

Title:

You are invited to take part in a research study of ‘A Comparative Study about Early Childhood Teachers’ Role and preparation in England and Kuwait’. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is conducted by Suad Noor as part of her PhD Project studies at Durham University. This research project is supervised by Dr. Julie Rattray, Email: Julie.Rattray@durham.ac.uk from the School of Education at Durham University.

The purpose of this study is to compare the two systems of early childhood education in England and Kuwait.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews. There will be 5 to 7 questions in the interview schedule.

Your participation in this study will take approximately 40- 60 minutes.

You are free to decide whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences for you.

All responses you give or other data collected will be kept confidential. The records of this study will be kept secure and private. All files containing any information you give are password protected. In any research report that may be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you individually. There will be no way to connect your name to your responses at any time during or after the study.

If you have any questions, requests or concerns regarding this research, please contact me via email at Suad A T Noor, Email: suad.noor@durham.ac.uk or by telephone at +447951353284

This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education Ethics Sub-Committee at Durham University (date of approval: 11/Feb/2013)

Suad A T Noor

Leazes Road
Durham City, DH1 1TA

Declaration of Informed Consent

- I agree to participate in this study, the purpose of which is to find the comparison of two early childhood education systems.
- I have read the participant information sheet and understand the information provided.
- I have been informed that I may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study without penalty of any kind.
- I have been informed that all of my responses will be kept confidential and secure, and that I will not be identified in any report or other publication resulting from this research.

I have been informed that the investigator will answer any questions regarding the study and its procedures. Suad A T Noor, School of Education, Durham University can be contacted via email: suad.noor@durham.ac.uk or telephone: +447951353284

- I will be provided with a copy of this form for my records.

Any concerns about this study should be addressed to the Ethics Sub-Committee of the School of Education, Durham University via email (Sheena Smith, School of Education, tel. (0191) 334 8403, e-mail: Sheena.Smith@Durham.ac.uk).

Date
Signature

Participant Name (please print)

Participant

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant and secured his or her consent.

Date

Signature of Investigator

**Appendix 3 (a): Permission Letter from Ministry of Education
Kuwait to Conduct Study in Kindergartens**

JO90837/13/5000

دولة الكويت

Ministry of Education
Office Of Under Secretary

مكتب الوكيل المساعد للتعليم العام

Ref. : _____

Date : _____

الرجوع : ١٥٤٧ / ٢٠٢٠

التاريخ : ٢٠٢٠ / ١٥ / ٢٠٢٠

السادة / مديري عموم المناطق التعليمية ، المحترمين

تحية طيبة ،، وبعد

**الموضوع : تسهيل مهمة الباحثة / سعاد عبد الكريم نور -
أطروحة دكتوراه كلية التربية الأساسية - الهيئة العامة
للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب**

بالإشارة إلى الموضوع أعلاه ، يرجى الإيعاز إلى من يلزم : لتسهيل مهمة
المذكورة أعلاه في الدخول إلى مدارس رياض الأطفال ، لإجراء مقابلات مع المعلمات ،
استكمالاً لبحث الدكتوراه الخاص بمعلمات رياض الأطفال بعنوان :
A comparative Study About Early Childhood Teachers Role
and Preparation in England and Kuwait
علماً بأن المعلومات سوف تستخدم لأغراض البحث العلمي .

مع خالص التحية

الوكيل المساعد للتعليم العام

نسخة ٢ : - الوكيل المساعد للتعليم العام
- الملف
K2418

٢٣١٦٦ - فاكس : ٢٤٨٣٥٧٣٣ - هاتف : ٢٤٨١٥٠١١ - ٢٤٨٣٥٧٤٣ - فاكس : ٢٤٨٣٥٧٣٣ - تليكس : ٢٣١٦٦
P.O.Box : 7 Safat. Code No. 13001 Kuwait - Tel : 24815011 - 24835743 - Fax : 24835733 - Telex. : 23166
E-mail : pesector@moe.edu.kw

**Appendix 3 (b): Permission Letter from Ministry of Education
Kuwait to Conduct Study in Universities**

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY
FOR APPLIED EDUCATION & TRAINING.

الهيئة العامة
للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب

الهيئة العامة للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب
كلية التربية الأساسية
قسم الأصول والإدارة التربوية

المرجع :
/ / التاريخ :
/ / الموافق :

السيد الفاضل / رئيس قسم الأصول والإدارة التربوية
جامعة الكويت
تحية طيبة وبعد ،،

الموضوع / طلب تطبيق بحث علمي على معلمات رياض الأطفال

الرجاء السماح لمعيدة البعثة الأستاذة / سعاد عبد الكريم نور (طالبة
الدكتوراه) لدينا، لتطبيق بحث علمي على معلمات رياض الأطفال و
أعضاء هيئة التدريس عن طريق عمل مقابلة وذلك لمساعدتها في بحث
الدكتوراه الخاص بمعلمات رياض الأطفال لمعرفة ((مواقفهن -
اتجاهاتهن المتعلقة بالوظيفة ومعتقداتهن وقناعاتهن بمهنة التدريس لديهن
بشكل عام)) .

مع جزيل الشكر ””
وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام ،،،

رئيس قسم الأصول والإدارة التربوية
دكتور / محسن الصالحي
رئيس قسم الأصول والإدارة التربوية

Appendix 4: Sample of Arabic Transcripts of TE-PT-TT

١

جدول مقابلات مدربي المعلمات

س ١: بشكل عام ما هو رأيك بنوعية وجودة التعليم الأكاديمي الذي تحصل عليه معلمات رياض الأطفال في بلدك؟ كيف يمكن تحسين نوعية تعليم المعلمات في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة؟

ج ١: لا أعتقد بأن جودة التعليم هنا في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة جيدة جداً. ويمكن الحكم عليها من خلال أداء المعلمات. ما تتعلمه المعلمات أثناء تدريبهم يختلف عما يمارس في الواقع في الفصول الدراسية. هناك الكثير من المشاكل في المناهج الدراسية لتعليم المعلمات وخاصة فيما يتعلق بالتدريب العملي فيما قبل الخدمة لأن المناهج الدراسية قبل الخدمة هي نظرياً أكثر بكثير من العملي. ووجهة نظري هي أن المعلمة لتصبح مختصة يجب أن تحصل على دورة تعليمية عملية بعد اجتياز الدراسة لمدة عامين في الكلية، وبالتالي فإنه سوف يسمح لها بالتعرف على حجم العمل المطلوب منها في رياض الأطفال الذي وضع لها من خلال التجربة. نعم، لدينا برنامج جيد قبل الخدمة يقوم على أسس نظرية، ولكن هذا البرنامج لا يتمتع بالوقت الكافي للتدريس والمزاولة العملية الفعلية في مختلف المدارس. العمل الميداني ذو جودة عالية، ولدينا معلمات قادرات ومتحمسات في جميع أنحاء البلاد. الطالبة (المعلمة) هي جوهر التعليم، وانهم متفاوتون من حيث تحقيق أهداف المنهج الدراسي، وبالتالي نحن بحاجة إلى مقررات عملية. نحتاج لدراسة المنهج بعناية وكذلك كل موضوع على حدة مثل المواضيع الدراسية والأدوات التعليمية، مع وسائل توضيحية للطفل. حتى الآن بعض المعلمات غير قادرات على استخدام جهاز العرض والشرائح بالشكل الصحيح والمطلوب، وبالتالي فإن الخطأ ليس الروضة. نحن نحاول تلخيص عمل المهنة في أربع سنوات من الكلية في النهج العملي، والتي تتمثل في صفات المعلمات. نعم أنا أدمج هذه التقنيات، التي تنتج دائماً نتائج جيدة.

س ٢: ما هو انطباعك عن سياسات التعليم للطفولة المبكرة وأيضاً الهيكل التنظيمي لتعليم الطفولة المبكرة وكذلك التعليم الخاص بالمعلم في بلدك؟

ج ٢: نعم قامت وزارة التربية والتعليم بالكويت بتنفيذ العديد من السياسات التعليمية لتعزيز التعليم في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة

والتمويل لإنشاء رياض الأطفال في مختلف البلاد.

لدينا مراكز للطفولة المبكرة، وهي مفيدة جداً وتفتح آفاقاً للنهج التعليمي. الأطفال الآن ليسوا كما في السابق، فهم منفتحين

على العالم التكنولوجي ويمتلكون القدرات والعقول المنفتحة.

نحن نواجه صعوبات، وبالتالي يجب أن نتعاون فيما بيننا وبين الأساتذة ولكن للأسف نحن مجرد قطاع تدريبي، ومع

ذلك نحن نريد الإفادة. يجب التواصل مع الأساتذة من أجل الوصول بالطالبة (المعلمة) إلى أعلى مستوى من المعرفة

بعد اجتيازها المقررات الدراسية، وإعدادها وصقلها حتى تصبح مدركة في عملها الميداني إلى ما يجب أن تقدمه.

معرفة المعلمات

س٣: هل المعرفة القائمة على طرق التدريس العلمية ضرورية لتمكين المعلم من مساعدة الطالب في فهم المادة التعليمية؟

ج٣: في رأيي، تكتسب المعلمات في رياض الأطفال المعرفة من خلال التعليم والاعداد فيما قبل الخدمة ولكن أيضا برامج المعلمات أثناء الخدمة تساعدهن على تطوير مهاراتهم ومعارفهن التربوية، والمواد التعليمية والمناهج الدراسية رغم افتقارها إلى المعرفة التربوية العلمية الشاملة. كما ان المتدربات يلاحظن بعض المعلمات من ذوي الخبرة في ورش العمل خلال فترة تدريبهن حيث يجب على معلمات رياض الأطفال تحسين معارفهن التربوية وكذلك معرفة المحتوى التربوي لكي يواصلن عملهن كمعلمات رياض اطفال.

معتقدات المعلمات

س٤: ما هو رأيك في معتقدات المعلمة المتدربة حول طبيعة التعليم والتعلم في بداية التخصص الأكاديمي؟

تواجه المعلمة صعوبة في التكيف مع بيئة رياض الأطفال، وبعضهم يتعرض للاكتئاب وعدم التوازن، وهذا لأن التعامل مع الأطفال يتطلب ليس فقط تغطية المنهج ولكن أيضا السلوك المناسب وكذلك الحب والرعاية. لذلك، يصعب عليها التعامل مع الأطفال أثناء وجودها في هذه الضغوط النفسية. نعم معتقداتهم حول التعليم والتعلم تتغير مع مرور الوقت. وانا من جانبي أقدم النصائح وفي النهاية الاختيار لهم.

مواقف المعلمات

س٥: ما مدى سهولة التأثير على مواقف المعلمات المؤهلات حديثا وذوي الخبرة؟

ج٥: اه نعم، كما تعلمون، عندما تحضرن الطالبات للقبول في الجامعة يكون لديهن مواقف مختلفة، سواء إيجابية أو سلبية، ولكن مع مرور الوقت تتحسن مواقفهم بشكل إيجابي أكثر نحو التعليم في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة والتدريب. دورات التدريس لدينا تعزز مفاهيمهن وأفكارهن. كما اننا نقدم منهج لتحسين مواقف وسلوكيات المتدربات. كما تعلمون أن كل طالبة تأتي الى هنا من خلفية وثقافة مختلفة قليلا، الحضرية أو البدوية، وبالتالي، فإننا نواجه المواقف المختلفة من طالباتنا.

مهنة التدريس

س٦: ما هو تأثير التقنيات والأساليب المتقدمة أثناء عملية التعليم والتعلم؟ هل مدة التدريب العملي كافية؟

نعم هناك تأثير كبير من قبل معرفة التقنيات والأساليب المتقدمة لتحسن المتدربة من نفسها وتواكب التطور. لا يزال لدينا بعض الطالبات (المعلمات) الذين لا يستطيعون استخدام الطرق التعليمية بشكل صحيح. لذلك أعتقد أن معلمات رياض الأطفال يجب أن يكون لديهن فهم لأهداف رياض الأطفال وعملية التعليم والتعلم. وينبغي أن يكون لديهن معرفة بإدارة الصف وبعض الاحتياجات والمطالب المحددة للبنين والبنات على حدة. عادة تكون المعلمة غير مقتنعة بأنها تستطيع أن تحدث فرقا خلال التدريس في الفصول الدراسية، لأن بعضهن أكمل أربع سنوات من الدراسة ولم يكنوا راضين عن علاماتهم المنخفضة، وبالتالي فهي لا تقدر التفاوت بين علامات جيدة وجيدة جدا وممتازة. وعلاوة على ذلك، يفضل بعضهن الانخراط في وظائف إدارية.

نعم يمكنهم الحصول على تجربة تعليمية ممتازة. نحن رواد في مجال رياض الأطفال، ومحتوى الفصول الدراسية تكلف الحكومة الكثير من حيث تقديم الخدمات ومعدات الأطفال. ومع ذلك فإن التقصير في المعلمة، حيث ان بإمكانها ان تكون تتقدم أو تتراجع. لذلك يجب على المعلمة ان تنزل إلى مستوى تفكير الطفل وتتحدث مثله / مثلها. نعم، يجب علي عقد اجتماعات والاستماع للآخرين والتحسين من نفسي.

س ٧: ما مدى قوة شعورك بأنه يمكنك إحداث فرق تعليمي في حياة الطالبة؟

ج ٧: أنا قادرة على إحداث فرق معهن لأن كل ما أعرفه أحاول بقدر المستطاع مساعدة المعلمات به، ولا ادخر أي معلومة عليهم.

أحقق تقدما مع هؤلاء المعلمات من خلال شرح نقاط ضعفهن خلال هذه الستة أسابيع وأسعى دائما لتقديم الحلول لهن في كل أسبوع. أنا لا أحاول أن أتصيد الخطأ ولكن بدلا من ذلك أقدم لهن المشورة حتى لا تخيب آمالهن.

٢)

جدول مقابلات المعلمات الممارسات

س ١: بشكل عام ما هو رأيك بنوعية وجودة التعليم الأكاديمي الذي تحصل عليه معلمات رياض الأطفال في بلدك؟ كيف يمكن تحسين نوعية تعليم المعلمات في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة؟

ج ١: معلمات رياض الأطفال هم بحاجة دائما إلى التدريب. ولكي تصبح معلمة في رياض الأطفال يجب أن تكون على الأقل حاصلة على درجة البكالوريوس في التعليم في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة، وان تتضمن فترة ما قبل الخدمة وأثناء الخدمة برامج تدريبية لمساعدتهم على اكتساب المعرفة وممارسة التدريس وعملية التعلم في رياض الأطفال. ان تعليم معلمات رياض الاطفال في الكويت بعيد عن الواقع، وبالتالي يجب تعديل المناهج الدراسية حتى لا يصبح متلقن الطفل فقط. كما أن إعداد الطفل يحتاج إلى تعديل. لو تسأليني عن نفسي، أستطيع أن أقول إن إعدادي وتدريبني كان في الغالب نظريا ولم يكن له أي علاقة برياض الأطفال.

التدريس هو مهمة، ثقة ومسؤولية ويتم تنفيذها بكافة الوسائل. ومهنة التدريس هي بالتأكيد ابداع ورعاية، لأن هذا هو اساس هذه المهنة. الجزء المهني ممتع جدا، ولكن الجزء الإداري يتطلب المزيد من التعاون من أجل عدم وضع المعلمة والمدرسة ككل تحت ضغط كبير.

وفيما يتعلق بالتدريب، لقد كان الفترة 12 أسبوعا من التدريب مع المشرفين، وكانت شاملة وجيدة جدا. الدورات التدريبية مهمة بشكل اساسي من وقت لآخر لمعرفة طريقة التعامل مع الطفل، لأن رياض الأطفال هي المرحلة الأكثر أهمية في حياة الطفل وبناء الشخصية سواء له/ لها.

س ٢: ما هو انطباعك عن سياسات التعليم للطفولة المبكرة وأيضاً الهيكل التنظيمي لتعليم الطفولة المبكرة وكذلك التعليم الخاص بالمعلم في بلدك؟

ج ٢: العديد من أولياء الأمور يقومون بتسجيل أطفالهم في المدارس الخاصة الأميركية والبريطانية لأن المناهج

التعليمية يتم تحسينها وتحديثها بشكل منتظم. وعدم وجود معلمين متخصصين في المدارس الحكومية جعل المعلم يقع على عاتقه الكثير من المهام. الهيكل التنظيمي أيضا يحتاج إلى إعادة اصلاح.

معرفة المعلمات

س ٣: هل المعرفة القائمة على طرق التدريس العلمية ضرورية لتمكين المعلم من مساعدة الطالب في فهم المادة التعليمية؟

ج ٣: بالطبع لن اكون على دراية في كل شيء، ذلك اساسه أن الطفل نفسه ومحيطه يتغير باستمرار، وبالتالي يجب أن يكون هناك تحسين مستمر ومزيد من التعليم لتقديم المناهج الدراسية للأطفال الصغار. خلال عملي 6 سنوات، جمعت

معرفة هائلة وخبرة في التدريس إضافة الي كيفية استخدام المواد المناسبة خلال الأنشطة واتمني الحصول على المزيد من

التدريب أثناء عملي لأحسن من طرق التدريس التربوية لدي.

نعم، المزيد من معرفة المحتوى التربوي للمعلمة مهم جدا، وقد استفدت كثيرا من ذلك في مهنتي. وإذا تلقت المعلمات

تدريباً قبل الخدمة وأثناء الخدمة، فإن هذا سينعكس على شخصياتهم وعلى ممارساتهم المهنية أيضا. وبطبيعة الحال، يجب

على المعلمات تحسين أساليبهن التعليمية في جميع الاوقات. العديد من المقررات النظرية الأكاديمية لم استفيد منها، باستثناء

عدد قليل من المقررات.

معتقدات المعلمات

س ٤ ما هي قناعاتك حول طبيعة التدريس والتعلم عند بداية التخصص الأكاديمي؟

ج ٤: أشعر بالفخر بأن اكون معلمة رياض أطفال وأنا اعتز بهذه المهنة، والأهم من ذلك أنني أحب التعامل مع الأطفال.

ليس كل التعلم عبر المناهج الدراسية سوف يفيد الطفل في حياته اليومية، وهناك حاجة إلى مزيد من الخبرات والمفاهيم

لهذا الغرض. في رأيي، المعلمة الجيد في رياض الأطفال هي التي تبذل جهودا مخلصه لتنمية الأطفال، وتطوير شخصياتهم،

وتعريفهم بالجوانب الثقافية ومعاملتهم بصبر شديد وتحسين المشاكل السلوكية الخاصة بهم. إيماني القوي بالقيم الإسلامية

يجبرني على تطبيق عقائده عند تدريس الأطفال.

مواقف المعلمات

س ٥: ما مدى سهولة التأثير على مواقف المعلمات المؤهلين حديثا وذوي الخبرة؟

ج٥: يجب على جميع المعلمين العمل كفريق واحد، ولكن لسوء الحظ هذا لا يحدث. الكفاءة الذاتية ضرورية وكذلك التعاون

لتحقيق التقدم. موقف المعلمة يؤثر في عملية التعليم والتعلم لمعلمات رياض الأطفال الجدد او وذوي الخبرة. لدي 10

سنوات من الخبرة في التدريس الأطفال الصغار في هذه الروضة ويجب أن أقول إنني طورت موافقي بشكل ايجابي مع خبرتي، والآن أنا أكثر ثقة في التدريس واللعب مع هؤلاء الأطفال الرائعون.

مهنة التدريس

س٦: ما هو تأثير التقنيات والأساليب المتقدمة أثناء عملية التعليم والتعلم؟ هل مدة التدريب العملي كانت كافية؟

ج٦: أساليب التدريس والتعلم التي استخدمها في المقام الأول هي اللعب والمسابقات والألعاب الذهنية، ورواية القصص، وبالطبع استخدام الأجهزة التكنولوجية. من خلال عملي لمدة 6 سنوات تراكمت لدي المعرفة والخبرة الهائلة بالإضافة إلى استخدامي المعدات والأدوات التكنولوجية، وبالتالي انقذت الكثير من وقتي في أداء اعمالي. لقد ازدهر تدريسي مع الممارسة اليومية والخبرة المعرفة النظرية الأكاديمية خلال التدريب قبل الخدمة لم تكن كافية. ووزارة التربية والتعليم تمنح لنا بعض المساعدة من حيث المعدات والأدوات التكنولوجية. ولم يتضمن منهج تدريب المعلمات تطبيق عملي جيد جدا.

ولا بد لي من القول بأنه يجب أن تؤخذ تلك التجربة المدرسية على مدى فترة أطول. 12 أسبوعا لا يكفي لهذا البرنامج الحالي. حيث تنقسم هذه الأسابيع 12 إلى مرحلتين: خلال أول 6 أسابيع المتدربات فقط يشاهدون المعلمات الممارسات وكيفية تدريسهن وخلال المرحلة الثانية يمارسون هم التدريس. أنا أقوم بتنفيذ اساليب التدريس، التي تعلمتها خلال التدريب العملي قبل الخدمة، وهذا الاسلوب استقدت منه أكثر من الأسلوب النظري. أطلب من وزارة التربية زيادة مدة ممارسة التدريب العملي عند الإعداد الفعلي، بدلا من تدريس النظريات. وبالتأكيد، فإن المادة التعليمية في الفصول الدراسية لها تأثير كبير على الأهداف التعليمية. أنا شخصا اسعى جاهدة لتحقيق الأهداف التعليمية المطلوبة، والي حد ما اعتبر إنني نجحت في ذلك.

س٧: ما مدى قوة شعورك بأنه يمكنك إحداث فرق تعليمي في حياة الطلاب؟

ج٧: في الواقع، لدي تأثير إيجابي على الأطفال على الرغم من أن هناك الكثير من الاطفال في الصف. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن المنزل والمحيط الاجتماعي له تأثير حاسم. هذه النوعية من الأطفال بحاجة إلى اهتمام والحب من أجل تقدمهم. أنا معلمة رياض الأطفال مؤهلة تعلمت تطبيق مختلف مجالات المنهج الدراسي طوال عمليته تدريسي والقيام بالأنشطة المناسبة لتعزيز الذكاء المعرفي والبدني والعاطفي.

٣

جدول مقابلات المعلمات المتدربات

المعلمات المتدربات - التدريب جزء من المنهج

س١: هل تشعرين بأن المقررات الدراسية التي حصلت عليها خلال دراستك في الكلية أعدتك بشكل ملائم لتوصيل المنهج

التعليمي للسنوات المبكرة؟

ج ١: نعم، يجب أن أقول إن هذا البرنامج أعدني بشكل كاف لتقديم مناهج رياض الأطفال على الرغم من أنه يفتقر إلى الجوانب العملية. حيث تتطلب المتدربة تدريباً مكثفاً من أجل إتقان هذه المهنة. نحن فقط نتدرب لمدة 12 إلى 16 أسبوعاً، وهي فترة غير كافية. نريد فترة أطول تمكننا من الوصول إلى المستوى المطلوب. هذا البرنامج التعليمي عزز معرفتي للتدريس في رياض الأطفال. خلال هذا البرنامج، درست علم النفس للطفل، وكيفية التفاعل مع الأطفال الصغار وفروقاتهم الفردية. كما تعلمت تصميم الأنشطة المناسبة باستخدام مزيج من مهارات الحرف اليدوية والمواد المحلية. فناعتي هو أن الأطفال الصغار يحبون أن ينجزوا الأشياء من تلقاء أنفسهم. فهي في البداية مهنة إبداعية، ولكنها تعتبر مهنة واجب في دولة الكويت في ضوء الامتيازات المقدمة من الدولة والتي تتناسب مع ظروف المرأة العاملة في الكويت. ومن ثم فهي تفتقر إلى الإبداع وشغف مهنة تدريس في رياض الأطفال، على عكس البلدان المتقدمة أو العالم الأول حيث تعتبر مهنة إبداعية.

المعرفة المهنية

س ٢: هل تعتقد أن التعليم والتدريب للمعلمة قبل مزاولة العمل يعزز من المعرفة المهنية لديك لتدريس الأطفال الصغار؟

ج ٢: إيماني بالذكاء والشفافية والبراءة عند الأطفال وشغفي هو غرس القيم والأخلاق فيهم. إنني أدرك أن الطفل شريحة

نظيفة مع الذكاء العالي الغريزي. وهذا يدفعني إلى حب تطوير هذا الذكاء وتشكيل شخصية الطفل وفقاً للمبادئ والقيم والأخلاق.

في رأيي، إنها فعالة بنسبة 40٪ بسبب هيمنة الدراسة النظرية على الجانب التطبيقي العملي مما يؤدي إلى عدم القدرة على التعامل بشكل صحيح مع الأطفال. وأود أن أضيف نقطة هامة من تجربتي في التدريب الميداني لسوء الحظ، أصبح التدريس في رياض الأطفال تجاري. وبعبارة أخرى كلما زاد شراء المعلمة للأدوات والمعدات والمستلزمات والمواد التعليمية، فإن تقديرها وتقييمها يكون أعلى من قبل الإدارة التعليمية، سواء كان ذلك مشرفة الفنية أو المديرة أو الموجهة هم فقط يركزون على مقدار ما انفقته المعلمة من جيبها الخاص والمال على الفصل والأطفال وتقييمها ليس على الجهود المبذولة وقدراتها وتفاعل الأطفال معها ومحبتهم لها.

العلاقة بين منهج تدريب المعلمة والمنهج المدرسي

س٣: برأيك ما أهمية دور المنهج الأكاديمي في التعليم المقدم لمعلمات رياض الأطفال من حيث التطبيق العملي؟ وهل تشعرين ان المناهج الدراسية لتعليم المعلمات له تطبيق عملي مناسب؟

ج٣: أعتقد أن المناهج الدراسية لتعليم معلمات رياض الأطفال مفيدة للعمل مع الأطفال في الروضة، ولكن هناك بعض المواد الدراسية ليس لها صلة، حيث اننا لم نتمكن من الاستفادة منها خلال ممارسة التدريس الفعلي. وعلاوة على ذلك، فإن هناك بعض المواد متداخلة ومتكررة في المعرفة وبعيدة عن العالم الحقيقي للتعليم. وأعتقد أنه ليس هناك حاجة لتعليمنا هذه المواد، حيث انها مضيعة للوقت. لقد درست المستوي ٢ في رياض الأطفال ولقد لاحظت أن غالبيتها تنطوي على تعليم المهارات للأطفال الذين يعانون من نقص في الأنشطة البدنية. وأنا شخصيا أرى أن المناهج الدراسية ناقصة وضعيفة ولا تلبي متطلبات الأطفال. كما أن الخبرات ليست مناسبة لهم وغير مفيدة وتحتاج إلى استبدالها بأخرى جذابة، وهذا ما يثبت حقيقة أنه عندما يسأل الطفل ما الذي تعلمه في اليوم السابق، يقول انه لا يتذكر أي شيء لأنها ليست جذابة ومفيدة.

معرفة المعلمات

س٤: هل معرفة المحتوى التربوي ضرورية لتتمكن المعلمة من مساعدة الطفل في فهم المواد التدريسية؟

ج٤: نعم، من وجهة نظري، معرفة المحتوى التربوي هي قلب التدريس. وهذا الجانب من شأنه أن يعزز جودة تعليم المعلمات في رياض الأطفال. وفهمهم لطرق التدريس والمادة التعليمية. دخلت الجامعة من دون أي معرفة مسبقة عن التعليم في رياض الأطفال... لم أكن أعرف مدى أهمية هذا المجال ومدى أهمية فهم النظريات والأساليب التعليمية للأطفال الصغار. ربما كنت متحاملة بمعتقداتي بعض الشيء حول التعليم في مرحلة رياض الأطفال. ومع ذلك، فقد زادت معرفتي وأشعر بالراحة لدخولي في مجال التدريس. وقد حسن برنامج تدريب المعلمات معرفتي وغير اعتقاداتي عن التدريس.

معتقدات المعلمات

س٥: ما هي اعتقاداتك حول طبيعة التعليم والتعلم عند بداية التخصص الأكاديمي؟

ج٥: حتى أكون صادقة جدا، معتقداتي عن التدريس قبل هذا البرنامج لم تكن جيدة جدا. إن معلمات رياض الأطفال في دولة الكويت لا يحظون باحترام كبير أو تقدير أو إجلال انها تعتبر بمثابة جليسة أطفال أو مربية أو خادمة. إن الوظائف الإدارية وحدها هي التي تحترم، وقد تسبب ذلك في إحباط وامتهان لي ولزميلاتي، مما دفعني إلى اتخاذ قرار صعب، ألا وهو الانتقال إلى مهنة أخرى بسبب سوء المعاملة وعدم التقدير الذي شهدناه خلال التدريب الميداني والذي هو بصراحة كان سبب التحول من مهنة التدريس في رياض الأطفال إلى وظيفة إدارية. وبعد برنامج التدريب، ازدادت قناعاتي بأهمية التفاعل مع الأطفال، والانتقال إلى مستواهم وزيادة الوسائل التوضيحية والقصص الوهمية.

مواقف المعلمات

س٦: ما مدى قوة شعورك بأنه يمكنك إحداث فرق تعليمي في حياة الطلاب؟

يمكنني أن أحدث فرقا بسبب شخصيتي القيادية، شغفي هو الإبداع والتعليم وحيي للأطفال والتعامل معهم. إن شخصية المعلمة وذكائها يؤهلها لتحديد كل طفل بصرف النظر عن شخصيته الطفل الصعبة والنشاط الذي يناسبه والتعامل معه بالطريقة التي تتناسب مع شخصية سواء كان عنيد أولديه فرط نشاط أو غير اجتماعي. تعلمت خلال

برنامج تدريب المعلمات الأساليب المناسبة لتعليم الأطفال الصغار، وكيفية تحسين قدرات الأطفال. وأثناء التدريب الميداني، زادت قناعاتي فيما يتعلق بمرونة المعلمة مع الأطفال، والنزول إلى مستواهم، وسؤالهم عن رأيهم وفتت انتباههم إلى التصورات الحسية واللعب الخيالي.

مهنة التدريس

س٧: ما هو تأثير التقنيات والأساليب المتقدمة خلال عملية التعليم والتعلم؟

ج٧: من رأيي، ان جميع التقنيات والأساليب الحديثة، مثل جهاز العرض والكمبيوتر مهمة لنمو الطفل ومواكبته للتكنولوجيا الحديثة، مثل الاياد والايود حيث ان لهم تأثير على عملية التدريس. ومما لا شك فيه أن التدريب الميداني يعزز مهارات المعلمة، ولكني أعتبره نموذجي بسبب تركيزه على تحصيل الطالبة ودرجاتها، ومن ثم فهو يفتقر إلى الإبداع. الإبداع في تعليم أطفال الروضة يعتمد على شغف المعلمة لمهنة التدريس في رياض الأطفال، وحب الإبداع والتنمية لهذه المهنة، وعدم اعتباره واجبا. وقد أتاح لنا التدريب العملي اكتساب مهارات تقييم الطفل بشكل مناسب. وكل نشاط له أسلوبه الخاص للتقييم، على سبيل المثال في الألعاب التي تنطوي على حركة نستخدم "بطاقة ملاحظة" ومراقبة ما إذا كان الطفل قد أتقن المهارات المناسبة أم لا.

Appendix 5: Sample of English Transcripts of TE-PT-TT

1

Teacher Educators Interview Schedule

Q1: = What is your opinion about the overall quality of early childhood teacher education in your country? How could it be possible to improve the quality of early childhood teacher education?

A1: I do not think that the quality of early childhood teacher education is very good. It can be judged by the performance of the teachers. What teachers learn during their training is different from what actually is practiced in the classroom.

There are a lot of problems in the curriculum of teacher education especially related to the pre-service because the curriculum of the pre-service is much more theoretical rather than practical.

My viewpoint is that for the teacher to become competent she must sit for practical educational course after passing two year study at college, thus she will recognize the extent of work required at kindergarten and put her through the experience.

Yes, we have good pre-service programme on theoretical bases, but this programme does not have sufficient time for teaching practice in the real set up of schools. Field-work is of high quality, and we have teachers who are capable and passionate all over the country. Student (teacher) is the core of education, and they vary in terms of achieving the curriculum, hence we need a practical course.

We need to examine the curriculum carefully as well as each subject separately such as the subject on Educational Tools, also coming up with illustrative method for the child. Up until now some teachers are unable to use the projector and its films properly, hence the fault is not the kindergarten.

We attempt to summarize the work of the professors in four years of college in the practical approach, which represent refinement of the teachers. Yes, I incorporate these techniques, which always produce good results.

Q 2: What is your perception about the early childhood education policies and current organizational structure of early childhood education and its teacher education in your country?

A2: Yes, Ministry of Education, Kuwait has launched many education policies to promote the early childhood education and funded to establish the kindergartens in the country.

We have early childhood center, which is very beneficial and opens up horizons for educational approaches. Our children are not like before, they are open to the world of technology and possess capabilities and open minds.

We face difficulties hence we must cooperate amongst ourselves and with the professors, but unfortunately we are just training sector, nonetheless we need to benefit. Must communicate with the professors in order to bring the student (teacher) to high level of knowledge after passing the curriculum courses, and to prepare and refine her to become mindful in her field-work to what she must deliver.

Teachers' Knowledge

Q 3: Is pedagogical content knowledge necessary to empower teacher to help the student to understand the subject matter?

A3: In my opinion, the kindergarten teachers gained their knowledge from pre-service teacher education but in-service teacher programmes also help them to develop their skills and knowledge of pedagogy, subject matter and curriculum material, although they lack thorough content pedagogical knowledge. They also observe some experienced teachers during the teacher training workshops. The kindergarten teachers should improve their pedagogical knowledge as well as content knowledge to sustain as a early years teacher.

Teachers' Beliefs

Q 4: What do you believe about the nature of teaching and learning at the start of the training programme?

A4: The teacher faces difficulty in adapting to the kindergarten environment, some get depressed and imbalanced, this because dealing with children requires not only covering the curriculum but also suitable behavior as well as love and care. Therefore, it is difficult for her to deal with the children while she is in this psychological conditions.

Yes, our beliefs about teaching and learning changes with time. From my side I offer advices and at the end it is their choice.

Teachers' Attitudes

Q 5: = How easy is it to influence the attitudes of newly qualified and experienced teachers?

A5: Oh yes, you know, the students come in the university for admission with different attitudes, positive or negative, but with the passage of time they improved their attitude more positively towards early childhood education and its training. Our teaching courses enhance their ideas and thoughts. We also offer the course to improve the attitude and behaviours of trainees. You know every student comes here from different background and a bit different culture, urban or rural, therefore, we face different attitudes from our students.

Teaching Practice

Q 6: = What is the impact of advanced techniques and methods during the learning teaching process? Is the duration of teaching practicum is enough?

A6: Yes, there is a great impact of advanced knowledge and methods to stay abreast with development and to improve herself. We still have some students (teachers) who cannot use educational methods properly. I think kindergarten teachers should have the understanding of kindergarten objectives and the process of teaching and learning. They should have the knowledge of class management and some certain needs and demands of boys and girls separately.

The teacher is usually not convinced that she can make a difference by teaching in the classroom, because some of them completed four years of study and were satisfied with low marks, hence they do not appreciate the variance between good, very good and excellent marks. Besides, some of them prefer to engage in administrative jobs.

Yes they can get excellent teaching experience. We are pioneers in the field of kindergarten, and the classroom content costs the Government a lot in terms of services and tools for the children. Yet the deficiency is in the teacher, where she can be excellent or retreat. The teacher must go down to the child's level and talk like him/ her. Yes, because I must hold meetings, listen to others and improve myself.

Q 7: How strongly do you feel that you can make an educational difference in students' lives?

A7: I am capable of making a difference because whatever I know I tried hard to help the teachers with, and I save no piece of information from reaching them.

I make progress with such teachers by explaining to them their weakness points during six weeks and provide solutions every week. I do not try to catch mistake but instead offer advice so as not to disappoint them.

2

Practicing Teachers' Interview Schedule

Q 1: = What is your opinion about the overall quality of early childhood teacher education in your country? How could it be possible to improve the quality of early childhood teacher education?

A1: Kindergarten teachers are always in need of teacher training. To become a kindergarten teacher she must have at least bachelor degree in early childhood education and involve in pre-service and in-service training programmes to help them acquire the knowledge and practice of kindergarten teaching and learning process. Childhood teacher education in Kuwait is far away from reality, thus the curriculum must be modified so as the child is not only dictated things. Preparing the child also needs modification. If you ask me, I can say that, my preparation and training were mostly theoretical and did not bear any relationship to kindergarten her.

Teaching is a mission, trust and responsibility to be implemented by all means. This profession is definitely creative and caring, because these are the pillars of this profession. The professional part is very nice, but the administrative part requires more collaboration in order not to place the teacher and the school as a whole under pressure.

As regards training, it was for 12 weeks with coaching from supervisors, and it was extensive and very good. Training courses and important from time to time mainly on the way to deal with the child, because kindergarten is the most crucial phase in child's life and for building his/her character.

Q 2: What is your perception about the early childhood education policies and current organisational structure of early childhood education and its teacher education in your country?

A2: Several parents register their children at American or British private schools because the curriculum is improved and updated regularly. Not having specialized teachers at the public schools made the teacher shoulder everything. The organizational structure also needs re-adjustment.

Teachers' Knowledge

Q 3: = *Is pedagogical content knowledge necessary to empower teachers to help the students to understand the subject matter?*

A3: Surely I will not be knowledgeable in everything, mainly because the child himself and his surrounding are changing constantly, hence there must be continuous improvement and further education to deliver the curriculum to young children. During my 6 years' career, I gathered enormous knowledge and experience of teaching and using appropriate material during the activities and my wish is to receive more in-service trainings to improve my pedagogical content knowledge.

Yes, more pedagogical content knowledge for the teacher is very important, and had benefited a lot from that in my profession. If teachers receive pre-service and in-service training, this will reflect on their characters and also job practice. Of course, teachers must improve their educational methods all the time. Many academic theoretical knowledge did not benefit me, except for few courses.

Teachers' Beliefs

Q 4: = *What do you believe about the nature of teaching and learning at the start of the training programme?*

A4: I feel proud to be a kindergarten teacher and I cherish this profession, and most importantly I love dealing with children. Not all class learning through the curriculum will benefit the child in his daily life, more experiences and concepts are needed for this purpose. In my opinion, a good kindergarten teacher is one who applies sincere efforts for the development of children, to develop their personalities, introduce them the cultural aspects and treat them very patiently to improve their behaviour problems. My strong belief on Islamic values force me to apply its doctrine when teaching kindergarteners.

Teachers' Attitude

Q5: = *How easy is it to influence the attitudes of newly qualified and experienced teachers?*

A5: All teachers must work as one team, but this is unfortunately not happening. Self-efficacy is essential as well as collaboration to achieve progress. The attitude of a teacher, influence the learning and teaching process of a new of experienced kindergarten teachers. I have 6 year experience of teaching to young children in this kindergarten and I must say that I developed a positive attitude with experience, and now I am more confident to teach and play with these beautiful children.

Teaching Practice

Q 6: = *What is the impact of advanced techniques and methods during the learning teaching process? Is the duration of teaching practicum is enough?*

A6: The teaching and learning approaches I use are mainly playing, competitions, mental games, storytelling and of course using technological tools. Throughout my job practice for 6 years I gathered enormous knowledge and experience in addition to using technology equipment and materials, hence I saved a lot of my time in performing the job. I flourished my teaching with everyday practice and experience the academic theoretical knowledge during pre-service training was not enough. The Ministry of Education grants us some help in terms of technology equipment and material. The teacher training curriculum did not contain very good practical applications.

I must say that school experience should be taken over a longer period. 12 weeks are not enough for this current programme. These 12 weeks are divided into two phases: during the first 6 weeks trainees just watch the practising teachers, how they teach and during second phase they practise their teaching. I implemented the teaching approaches, which I learned during pre-service teaching practice, and these approaches benefited me rather than theoretical approaches. I request to Ministry to increase the duration of teaching practice in the actual set up, rather than teaching theories.

Certainly, the subject matter in classroom has great influence on educational objectives. I personally strive to achieve the required educational objectives, and so far I succeeded.

Q 7: = *How strongly do you feel that you can make an educational difference in students' lives?*

A7: Actually, I have positive influence on children although there are many of them in the class. Besides, the home and surrounding communities have crucial influence. This type of children need close attention and love in order to make them progress. I am a qualified kindergarten teacher and learned to apply the areas of curriculum throughout my teaching process and do the appropriate activities to enhance the cognitive, physical and emotional intelligences.

3

Teacher Trainees Interview Schedule

Teacher Trainees' Training Part- Curriculum

Q 1: *Do you feel that your course is preparing you adequately to deliver the early years curriculum?*

A1: Yes, I must say that this programme prepared me adequately to deliver the kindergarten curriculum although, it lacked the practical aspects. A teacher trainee requires more intensive training in order to master this profession. We only train for 12 to 16 weeks, which is an insufficient period. We want a longer period enabling us to reach the required level. This teaching programme enhanced my knowledge to teach kindergarteners. During this programme, I studied the child's psychology, and how I interact with young children because of their individual differences. I also learned to design the appropriate activities by using the combination of handicraft skills and local materials. My belief is that young children love to do by themselves. To begin with, it is a creative profession, but it is considered a profession of duty in the State of Kuwait in light of state offered privileges, which suit the conditions of the working woman in Kuwait. Hence, it lacks creativity and the passion of the profession of Kindergarten teaching, contrary to advanced or first world countries in which it is deemed a creative profession.

Professional Knowledge

Q 2: *Do you think pre-service teacher education and training enhance your professional knowledge to teach young children?*

A2: My belief in the intelligence, transparency and innocence of children and my passion to instill values and ethics in them. I perceive the child as a clean slate with an instinctively high intelligence; this drives me to love developing this intelligence and forming the child's personality in accordance with principles, values and ethics.

In my opinion, it is 40% effective due to predominance of theoretical studies over the practical applied aspect thus leading to the inability of properly dealing with children.

I would like to add an important point from my experience in the field course. Unfortunately, Kindergarten teaching has become commercial. In other words, the more a teacher purchases educational tools, instruments, objects and materials, her appreciation and assessment are higher by the educational administration, be it technical supervisor, principal or superior, who focuses only on how much she spent from her own pocket and money on the class and the children and not on her assessment, exerted efforts, abilities and the children's interaction with her and loving her.

Relationship between Teacher Training Curriculum and School Curriculum

Q 3: *How important is the role of the curriculum in early years' teacher education? Do you feel that the curriculum of teacher education has appropriate practical application?*

A3: I think, the curriculum of kindergarten teacher education benefits us to work with kindergarten children, but a few subjects have irrelevant stuff, which we could not utilize during the actual teaching practice. Furthermore, some chapters are overlapping and repeated in knowledge and far from the real world of teaching. I think there is no need to teach them, its waste of time.

I have taught Kindergarten 2 and I have noticed that most of it involves teaching skills to the children with a lack of physical activities. I personally view that the curriculum is deficient and weak and it does not fulfill the children's requirements. Also, the experiences are neither suitable for nor beneficial to the children and need to be replaced with attractive ones, which are developed; this is substantiated in the fact that when a child is asked what he has learned the day before, he does not remember anything because they are not attractive and beneficial.

Teachers' Knowledge

Q 4: = Is pedagogical content knowledge necessary to empower teachers to help the students to understand the subject matter?

A4: Yes, in my perspective, pedagogical content knowledge is the heart of teaching. This aspect enhances the teaching quality of kindergarten teachers. They understand the methods to teach and understand the subject matter. I entered the university without any prior knowledge about kindergarten education,...I did not know how important is this field and how important it is to understand the theories and methods to teach the young children. I may have had prejudiced beliefs about pre-school education. However, my knowledge has increased and I feel comfortable to enter into the field of teaching.

The teacher training programme improved my knowledge and changed my beliefs about teaching.

Teachers' Beliefs

Q 5: = What do you believe about the nature of teaching and learning at the start of the training programme?

A5: Very honest, my beliefs about the teaching was prior to this programme were not very good. The Kindergarten teacher in the State of Kuwait is not well-respected, appreciated or valued as she is considered a babysitter, a nanny or a maid. Only the administrative jobs are respected and this has caused great frustration and abuse to myself and my colleagues and drives me to make a difficult decision, namely to proceed to another profession due to the improper treatment and lack of appreciation which we have witnessed in the field training and which frankly is the reason for the shift from the Kindergarten teaching profession to educational administration.

Following the training program, my conviction heightened as to the importance of interaction with children, getting down to their level and increasing illustrative methods and fictitious stories.

Teachers' Attitudes

Q 6: How strongly do you feel that you can make an educational difference in students' lives?

A6: I can make a difference due to my leadership personality, my passion for creativity and teaching and my love of children and dealing with them. A teacher's personality and intelligence qualify her to select, for every child regardless of his difficult personality, the activity that suits him and to deal with him in a manner suiting the child's personality, whether he is stubborn, hyperactive or non-social. I learned during my teacher training programme the appropriate methods to teach young children, how to improve the capabilities of kindergartners. During field training, my convictions heightened as to teacher flexibility with children, getting down to their level, asking their opinion and drawing their attention to sensory perceptions and imaginative play.

Teaching Practice

Q 7: What is the impact of advanced techniques and methods during the learning teaching process?

A7: In my opinion, all modern techniques and methods, such as the projector and the computer, for the child's development and keeping abreast with modern technology, like the iPad and the iPod impact the teaching process. Field training undoubtedly enhances a teacher's skills, but I consider it typical due to the student's output and its grades and hence it lacks creativity. Creativity in teaching Kindergarten children relies on the teacher's passion for the Kindergarten teaching profession, the love of creativity and development in this profession and not considering it a duty. Practical application has allowed us to acquire the skills of appraising the child appropriately. Each activity has its own method of appraisal, for example in games involving movement we use a 'note card' and observe whether or not the child has mastered the appropriate skills or not.